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The Fifth Generation and Beyond: Reflections on Contemporary Chinese Film Culture

by

Shiyu Louisa Wei ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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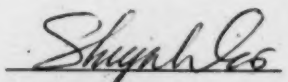

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October 26, 2001

Milan V. Dimić for Hong Yin (External)

To my dear mother

who has always encouraged me to amaze her in every possible way.

To my father

who sent me away from home nine years ago to have new experiences.

To my sweet little sister

who always believes that we are the best sisters in this world.

And to my husband

who can make me laugh even in the worst times and over a long distance.

Abstract

In studies of contemporary Chinese, Asian, or world cinema, the Fifth Generation is a term that no scholar can afford to miss. The term refers to a group of filmmakers that emerged in 1983 and initiated China's first art film movement. Although the art movement ended around 1988, these filmmakers have remained China's most important cultural figures. Although much has been written on them and their films in English, Chinese, and other languages, there was a regrettable absence of a systematic study of the Fifth Generation. This dissertation aims to respond to this absence by focusing on one question: what the Fifth Generation has changed?

The dissertation is structured around six concepts in China's critical discourse of the 1980s and 1990s: mass media, literature, nation, history, women, and personal narrative. The author regards literature, nation, and history as the three cornerstones of the Chinese film tradition and examines the Fifth Generation as a group of cultural rebels who has reshaped film's relationship with all the three concepts. Case studies are offered to provide new understandings of Postcolonialism, nationalism, and Orientalism along the theoretical discussion. The limitation of the generation's revolution is examined through its representation of women through engendered perspectives. The compromises of the Fifth Generation are reflected through an introduction of the Sixth Generation, as a more radical group of rebels who took nearly a decade to surface from the underground. From the personal narratives of urban stories narrated by these younger filmmakers, we may catch a glimpse of new trends in Chinese and world cinema.

In addition to textual analyses of film works by some rarely discussed directors, including Wu Ziniu, Li Shaohong, Feng Xiaoning, Ye Daying, and Yang Liping, the dissertation also offers concise historical reviews on how the Fifth Generation emerged, how film concept has been developed, how nationalism has been perceived, and how women have been presented by different generations of directors in China. By locating the Fifth Generation in the "big picture" of

contemporary Chinese film culture and mass media, the dissertation reveals how Chinese filmmakers have to constantly negotiate with the market, the censorship, and, the West.

Acknowledgement

It has taken me four years to complete this dissertation. I regard the long process an enjoyable journey, during which I traveled back and forth between China, Canada, and Japan for research, writing, and work. I am really in debt to many mentors and friends.

Professor Edward D. Blodgett first accepted me as a student under his supervision when I had a topic on poetry and painting in mind. After I found out where my true passion was, he accepted my change of topic with understanding. If it were not for his faith in me, and constant encouragement in more than one sense, I would not be able to achieve what I have today.

I am also grateful to Professor Milan V. Dimić, whom I first met in Ottawa in 1993 while looking for a school for my doctoral studies. He was introduced to me as one of the founders of comparative literature in Canada, but now I know that he is much more than that. What I have benefited from him is much more than the comments on this thesis.

My sincere thank also goes to Professor William Beard, who brought up the issue of film ontology during my defense of the thesis proposal, a point of departure that has led me to many discoveries. I was also a fan of the film series he hosted on television, learning a lot of things from Westerns to *femmes fatales*.

I also appreciate Professor Jennifer Jay and Professor Jack J.S. Lin who took part in my candidacy exams and made constructive suggestions to my thesis proposal. While Dr. Jay urged me to undergo an in-depth research with her historian's standards, Dr. Lin taught me something about Taiwan's culture and history that helped me to perceive the Fifth Generation in relation to Taiwan New Cinema.

Dr. Shuyu Kong and Dr. Maria Ng kindly agreed to serve on my defense committee when Dr. Jay and Dr. Lin had to withdraw for personal reasons. This change is to my benefit since both Shuyu and Maria have a strong interest in film and cultural studies. They have made many relevant suggestions.

The person I cannot thank enough is my friend Karen Kar-Wai Lam, who has always "encountered"—to borrow her word—films and materials related to my thesis during her own research. During the past four years, she has used her super Internet power and found dozens of books, videos, and VCDs from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Britain, and the United States.

I also want to show appreciation to Mr. Sandy Mactarggard, whose generous scholarship allowed me to do research in Beijing in 1998. During my stay in Beijing, I was able to talk to scholars at the China Film Art Research Institute, to access the China Film Archive, and

to meet famous critic-scholars such as Wang Yichuan and Rao Shuoguang, who presented me their works that are not available in bookstores.

Through friends in Beijing, I also befriended Dr. Zhiwei Xiao who teaches Chinese film history in California, and who read parts of my chapters and gave me good advice. My best friends in Josai International University, where I worked in the past two years, Ms. Komatsu Ran and Miss Vivian Y. Zhuang, have also helped me to search for useful materials in China and Japan. Through Ran, I befriended Peng Xiaolian, a fifth-generation female director, who told me stories that helped me to understand the generation at a more personal level.

I feel lucky that Professor Yin Hong, a famous film critic and scholar in China, agreed to be my external reader. His books had already enhanced my understanding of individual film works in the context of popular culture in China long before his assessment helped me to improve my dissertation.

Finally, I want to thank Barbara Churchill for proofreading the entire dissertation. Her warm thoughts and elaborating "speeches" can always make a cloudy day sunny. I also want to thank Kazumi Nagaike, Bev Moore, Abdul-Rasheed Na'allah, Paul Martin, Jerry White, Megan Jones, Guy Beauregard, and other friends for the good times in Edmonton, especially during those long cold winters.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTODUCTION 1

CHPATER 1 The Fifth Generation in Mass Media Reportage 7
1. The Fifth Generation and Its "Legend" 8
   1.1 Heaven's Chosen Ones 12
   1.2 Rebel with a Cause: A Passion Far from Primitive 17
2. Tripartite Negotiations in China's Film Circle and Mass Media 25
   2.1 Heroes or Prisoners? 27
   2.2 Triangular Relationships and Tripartite Negotiations 33

CHAPTER 2 Visual and Other Shocks 40
1. Chinese Cinema before the Fifth Generation: A Long Way to Film 40
   1.1 Foreign *Shadow Magic* into Chinese Shadowplay 41
   1.2 Divorce with Theatre and Departure from Literature 45
2. The Fifth Generation: Visual and Other Shocks 49
   2.1 Unfaithful Translations: From Literature to Film 51
   2.2 Unsettled Negotiations: Transforming the Literary Tradition? 59
3. Conspiracy or Corruption: "Surrender" of Elite Culture 64

CHAPTER 3 Narrating Nation and Nationalism 68
1. In Search of a National Form 71
2. From Nationalism to Sur-nationalism? 78
   2.1 Wu Ziniu: From Patriotism to Humanitarianism 80
   2.2 From Anti-British and Anti-Japanese to Anti-Fascism 86
3. China as Third World, or Local as Global? 92

CHAPTER 4 "History" Versus Its Film Version 99
1. The Emperor and His Women: Popularizing History 102
   1.1 The Man Who Is History 104
   1.2 Women Who Do Not Make History 108
2. Meaning of Red: Various Shades of Revolution 110
3. Darkest Nights or Sunniest Days: Collective versus Personal 115
4. Forgotten Corners: His Stories versus Hers 122
   4.1 Li Shaohong's *Blush* 122
   4.2 Joan Chen's *Xiu Xiu—The Story of a Sent-Down Girl* 128

CHAPTER 5 Feminine Consciousness and Problems of Women's Film 135
1. Women's Story, Men's Film 136
2. Female Directors, Feminine Consciousness, and Stories of the Other Woman 144
3. How Can A Woman Tell Her Story in A Film 150
   3.1 Hu Mei's *Army Nurse* 150
   3.2 Huang Shuqin's *Woman, Demon, Human* 154
   3.3 Yang Liping's *The Sun Bird* 157

CONCLUSION Breaking the Wave, Breaking the Wall 164

WORKS CITED 171

FILMOGRAPHY 189

Introduction

As a result of the socioeconomic reform starting in the late 1970s, China has experienced miraculous economic growth and drastic social changes, attracting both investment and various attentions from abroad. Thanks to Deng Xiaoping's relatively open policy, cultural discussions and debates have also been unprecedentedly lively in the past two decades, during which the rise of Fifth Generation was a milestone.

The Fifth Generation was the first group of Chinese filmmakers to establish their reputation by receiving a full range of awards from "outside"—first from Asian cultural circles, then from European film festivals, and finally, from Hollywood. Fifth-generation filmmakers made their debut in 1983, when "walking towards the world" was the loudest slogan, and remain the most controversial artists in China. Many scholars in cultural studies who hope to achieve a better understanding of Orientalism, Postcolonialism, Feminism, various Neo-isms, and Post-theories, have utilized fifth-generation works as primary texts.[1]

I began research in New Chinese Cinema (1979-) in 1997 and have failed to find a coherent and systematic account of how the Fifth Generation made *the* breakthrough in Chinese cinema. After reading over a thousand sources in English, Chinese, and Japanese, the purpose of this project became clear to me. I will aim at a systematic study of the Fifth Generation by attempting to answer one question: what has the Fifth Generation changed? In other words, I want to explore how fifth-generation films have redefined the concept of film in China and reshaped China's cultural images in the world.

There are few book-length studies in English devoted to the study of the Fifth Generation alone, but there are some works on gender, modernity, and popular culture in China that use fifth-generation films as primary texts. An influential theoretical analysis to date is Rey Chow's *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (1995), which not only provides insightful readings of two leading fifth-generation figures, Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige, but also situates their works in the context of postcolonial and feminist discourse. Apparently, foreign audiences have come to know a "China" through their films, which are "translations" of Chinese culture and tradition. Towards the end of her book, Rey Chow questions

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[1] In fact, many fifth-generation films are included in the curriculums of North-American institutions. Related details can be found in Linda C. Ehrlich and Ning Ma's "College Course File" and a special section of *Asian Cinema* edited by Sheldon H. Lu, "Problems and Prospects of Teaching Asian Cinema in

whether these directors qualify as cultural translators (182-84). I will take up this question in my later discussion.

Another detailed account of the Fifth Generation can be found in the second half of Zhang Xudong's *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms* (1997), which focuses on the group's politics of "visual encounter," its presentations of "social allegories," and its incorporation of the modern subjectivity in film narrative. The juxtaposition of Chinese avant-garde writers (examined in the first half of the book) and fifth-generation directors indicates how Zhang Xudong locates the two artistic groups in contemporary Chinese culture. Regrettably, in the attempt to form a neat and convincing comparison, the author excludes female members of both groups from his discussion.

Jerome Silbergeld's *China into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (1999) is largely devoted to readings of fifth-generation films, including an impressive discussion on female director Hu Mei's *Army Nurse* (1984), an important film ignored by most China-based male scholars. Although Silbergeld takes various genres of fifth-generation films into consideration, and constantly refers to traditional Chinese arts in his discussion, his study lacks a thread that holds all the chapters together.

Sheldon Hisao-peng Lu's edited book *Transnational Chinese Cinemas* (1997) contains interesting articles that examine fifth-generation films from national, historical, and engendered perspectives. Zhang Yingjin and Zhiwei Xiao's *Encyclopedia of Chinese Film* (1998) is also very helpful as it clarifies many terms and includes a large number of entries on fifth-generation and younger filmmakers. Moreover, Chris Berry's interviews with four female Chinese directors (1988), Tony Rayns' reportage on fifth-generation directors, Zha Jianying's *China Pop* (1995), and Peggy Chiao's *Dialogues with Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (1998), provide valuable first-hand information on how fifth-generation directors perceive filmmaking in China and abroad.

Compared to overseas scholars, China-based scholars more often associate fifth-generation films with other aspects of the contemporary Chinese film industry and popular culture. Even though terms translated from Western theories are frequently applied, they are meant to construct a cultural discourse that puts "China" at the center in order to resist the engulfing power of Western cultural hegemony. Among Chinese-language sources, Dai Jinhua's *Landscape in the Fog: Chinese Film Culture 1978-1998* (2000) presents a rather comprehensive picture of Chinese film culture in the past two decades. As a prominent feminist scholar in China, she offers in-depth analyses on representations of women in works by both male and female directors.

America: A Symposium," which contains short essays by John Lent, Keiko MacDonald, Marcia Landy,

Critic-scholar and TV commentator Yin Hong has followed new films in China closely and offers insightful reviews and case studies of fifth-generation and younger filmmakers in the context of media studies. Other scholars active in popular cultural studies, including Wang Yichuan and Chen Mo, demonstrate strength in their studies of Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige and what constitutes "cultural heroes" in the 1990s' China.

Among edited books, the two-volume *Chinese Film Theory: An Anthology* (Luo Yijun et al. 1992) is a good source for many significant historical and theoretical essays on Chinese film. Some of these essays have been translated into English and can be found in two books edited by G.S. Semsel and others: *Chinese Film Theory: A Guide to the New Era* (1990) and *Film in Contemporary China: Critical Debates, 1979-1989* (1993). These two books, together with Semsel's earlier *Chinese Film: The State of the Art in the People's Republic* (1987), are not exclusive studies of fifth-generation films, but they depict the cultural/critical context from which the Fifth Generation emerged.

Numerous articles on films by the fifth and sixth-generation directors and their contemporaries can be found in two major academic film journals of Mainland China: *Film Art*, the journal of China's Film Association, and *Contemporary Cinema*, the journal of China Film Art Research Center. Each year, the editorial offices of the two journals organize a number of seminars in association with other institutions, playing an important role in promoting new directors and raising new issues in Chinese film and cultural circles. Since 1999 *Contemporary Cinema* has been including a column titled "panoramic analysis of film" in each issue. In this column, film experts in various fields are invited to comment on the script, directing, acting, cinematography, sound, and cultural implications of new film works.

Different voices can be heard from Taipei's *Con/temporary* and *Unitas* magazines and Hong Kong's *City Entertainment*, *Ming-Pao Monthly*, and *Film Appreciation Journal*. In addition, I find the "Film Series" (*Dianying Guan*) published by Yuanliou Publishing Co. Ltd. and books published Wan Hsiang Books, two Taiwan-based publishers, very valuable in offering screenplays, commentaries, and critical writings from mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas scholars.[2]

Current studies have indeed offered intriguing readings of fifth-generation films and opened up many new dimensions of analysis, but there are some regrettable aspects in these studies

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Lucy Fischer, Anne Ciecko, and Sheldon H. Lu.

[2] Among Yuanliou's publications, for instance, there are Chen Kaige's *Young Kaige* (1990) and Chen Kaige and Wang Anyi's screenplay of *Temptress Moon* (1996). Wan Hsiang has published *Ju Dou* (1992) and *The Story of Qiu Ju* (1992), both edited by Peggy Chiao.

that deserve scholarly attention. On the one hand, many Western-based scholars apply Western theories to Chinese films without justifying why they prefer certain theories over others. On the other hand, some China-based scholars also quote Western theories out of their original cultural contexts. Moreover, a number of studies carried out before 1995 by both Western-based and China-based scholars involve information errors or terminological confusions yet have been cited by scholars who recently developed an interest in Chinese cinema.[3] Finally, what I find most regrettable is that many current studies of the Fifth Generation have excluded its female members for various reasons, even though they have made significant contributions to the generation's art movement and to its development.

Keeping in mind the limitations of previous studies, I will attempt to examine the role of the Fifth Generation in the "big picture" of contemporary Chinese film culture. Since frameworks in Western film theories cannot be readily employed due to certain differences in the understanding of the "film" as an ontological concept, I have thus turned to the Chinese sources. This examination has led to the discovery that literature, nation, and history have been three "cornerstones" upon which the Chinese film tradition has been built, while women, mass media, and personal narrative became new critical focuses in the latter half of the 1980s. In fact, from a very early stage of Chinese film history, most critic-scholars in China have agreed that a "good film" should possess a profound sense of literariness, reflect an aspect of the nation's spirit, and carry some sort of historical significance.

Each of the six key concepts—literature, nation, history, women, mass media, and personal narrative—can be a good point of departure in studying fifth-generation films. I choose to start with mass media because it is the carrier of critical debates on the Fifth Generation and is largely responsible for creating its "legends." The first chapter will define the concept of the Fifth Generation and locate it in Chinese film history. Then by further contextualizing the so-called fifth-generation phenomenon in contemporary Chinese culture at large, I will demonstrate that "tri-partite negotiations" are what characterize the pattern for both representations of, and, debates over, diverse aspects of culture after the emergence of the Fifth Generation.

The second chapter surveys the deep-rooted literary tradition of Chinese film. First, I will analyze how the literary tradition has developed from its early form of *yingxi* (shadowplay) theory,

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[3] I found in my research that from the mid-1990s, China-based scholars began to share a relatively consistent vocabulary that incorporates unified concepts translated from English sources. Meanwhile, Western-based scholars also began to use a more or less consistent vocabulary including terms translated from Chinese sources.

to new pragmatics that answer the call for the modernization of film language around 1980. Then, by explicating steps the fifth generation has taken to break away from traditional principles and methods in adapting literary works, I reveal how the fifth generation deconstructs an ideology encoded in literary signs through visual shocks, which are debased by many scholars as images devoid of meaning.

The third chapter deals with a number of issues constructed around the core of "nation": nationalization, nationalism, national characteristics, and so forth. I will first review the theoretical discussions on film nationalization during the 1980s as both an aesthetic exploration and an ideological attempt to break away from film tradition before the emergence of the Fifth Generation. Through a study of war films by fifth-generation director Wu Ziniu and Feng Xiaoning (who does not belong to any numbered generation), I will reveal how patriotism in traditional revolution/war films have been replaced by humanitarianism and sur-nationalism. I will also analyze how fifth-generation directors use folk customs and rituals to construct a local/national text in a global/international cultural context, where theories of Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and the Third World seem relevant.

The fourth chapter examines the intriguing relationship between history and film, focusing on how history has been popularized in Mainland Chinese films since the 1990s. I will demonstrate how fifth-generation directors allegorize history by blurring specific times and spaces and by using female characters absent from authoritative histories in order to challenge the traditional construction of history. A reading of Jiang Wen will be employed as an example of how the younger generation reconstructs history as personal story. Moreover, two female directors' works will be examined as efforts in writing the missing part of his/story.

The fifth chapter will first review how women have been represented by male Chinese directors of all generations, demonstrating how they have idealized female characters in accordance with their ideological beliefs. I will then examine how female directors of both the fourth and fifth-generations started to challenge male directors' idealization of women by presenting images of the "other" women, or those who play roles other than that of a mother, a daughter, or a wife. Finally, through case studies of three "women's films" by female directors, I will explore what constructs a women's film and the possibility of constructing a women's cinema in China.

The last section exposes the Fifth Generation's limitation by exploring how the Sixth Generation has further departed from Chinese film traditions, including the one established by fifth-generation films. For sixth-generation filmmakers, who had to be independent from the beginning,

pressures from the market, censorship, and the competition from older and more famous directors constitute all kinds of walls they have to break through. Although it took a decade for them to surface from the "underground," they have opened up new possibilities for Chinese film and presented their own visions in the landscape of contemporary Chinese film culture.

As the discussions will reveal, the six keywords of this project—mass media, literature, nation, history, women, and personal narrative—are intertwined. In mass media reportage, all the five other issues are touched upon. Although the Fifth Generation has shaken all the three cornerstones of literature, nation, and history of Chinese film tradition, its limitation is obvious when coming to the issues of representation of women and construction of personal narratives. I will conclude with a discussion about the Sixth Generation because I regard personal narrative as an ultimate challenge to Chinese tradition at large. Although I do not intend to offer a "definitive" study of the Fifth Generation, I do want to explore various aesthetic concerns, trends, and changes in Chinese film culture that are related to it.[4]

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[4] In almost all citations, works cited, and filmography, Chinese names appear with family names followed by given names. All citations of Chinese sources are my translation unless otherwise indicated. *Pinyin* is used in the spelling most Chinese names and titles, except for those already known by other types of spellings. When a film is mentioned for the first time, the director's name is usually given. Credits of films can be found in the filmography, which contains a list of "feature films by director" and one of "documentaries by director." While the directors are listed in an alphabetical order, his/her works are listed in a chronological order. The filmography includes almost all works by fifth-generation directors (1982-2000) and also those by other directors that are mentioned in the text.

Chapter 1 The Fifth Generation in Mass-media Reportage

The so-called fifth-generation phenomenon is a discourse characterized by a chain of discussions that emerged from critical analyses of fifth-generation films, and developed into a redefinition of such fundamental concepts as culture, nation, tradition, and history. Attracting in turn critic-scholars, laymen, and the mass media, this discourse is of great significance in creating a new critical climate in Chinese cultural circles, offering new insights on identity issues while bringing along new patterns of communication.

This chapter has two goals. The first is to locate the Fifth Generation in both Chinese film history and cultural contexts, while the second is to present a big picture of its intriguing relationships with other cultural factors in the mass media. By examining the Fifth Generation as a group of filmmakers, a film movement, an artistic stance, and a cultural phenomenon provoked by mass-media reportage, I explore why and how the Fifth Generation has managed to remain the center of attention for nearly two decades.

Before going into further analysis, we have to bear in mind that as recently as the early 1980s, in Mainland China, the concepts of culture and media did not connote what falls under the rubric of popular culture and mass media today. That is to say, the concept of "culture" mainly referred to what the Chinese have inherited from the "great" Chinese tradition, while media was almost synonymous with propaganda and a part of the state apparatus.

On one hand, when tracing Chinese history, we see that it has been the privilege and mission of the literati to interpret and carry on a pre-defined specific cultural heritage, including the tradition of reform and revolution. Only after the mid-1980s was the notion of culture further divided into that of elite and popular. Until that time, recognition from the literati had been crucial for an artist wanting to establish his/her work within mainstream cultural discourse. While elite culture became an updated concept of culture in the traditional sense, popular culture brought out what had previously been underscored by the literati, indicating that the relationship and function of the artist and the intellectual had changed.

On the other hand, before media turned "mass," it too was operated by intellectuals: those used as the "throat and tongue" of the communist party ran its official forms, while their counterparts from academia and other non-government organizations made their voices heard through unofficial channels. Both sides, however, seem to have an authority to speak *for* the mass, rather than giving the mass a chance to speak.

Thus, in many ways, Chinese literati have been playing a role between Kafka's doorman standing "Before the Law," who guards some unspeakable rules with authority, and Lu Xun's madman who desperately hopes the world will change for the better. This is why, for a Chinese artist, the highest award only comes when s/he has created something "groundbreaking" *yet* well-grounded in a context of established codes. Moreover, before media became "mass" and culture "popular," creative artists and critic-scholars could agree or disagree with each other, but most discussions were restricted to *dialogues* between these two parties of the intellectual stratum.

The Fifth Generation emerged just as mass media became a third voice joining the *dialogues* between artists and critics. Reaching out to an unmatchable audience, mass-media reportage soon revealed its "formidable agitating power" and is now the only force capable of counterbalancing sources from the authorities (Wang Shuo, *Ignorant* 11). In mass media's vocabulary, "controversial" lost its derogatory meaning and became instead a keyword to ensure attention. The Fifth Generation has been a focus of mass media exactly because it is China's first controversial artist group capable of answering a fresh call for cultural heroes. Nevertheless, without the wide coverage by mass media, this group alone could never have provoked the development of a cultural phenomenon, which directly or indirectly, turned *dialogues* into tripartite *negotiations* on many cultural and social layers. When dialogues become tripartite negotiations, the traditional pattern of evaluation is set in motion: artists and critics remain two major parties, while the third may be anyone from an international film festival judge to an ordinary audience with something to say. The following sections will depict how the Fifth Generation became a legend, while attempting to lay bare how it is related to other cultural factors in contemporary China.

1. The Fifth Generation and Its "Legend"

The term "fifth generation" came into use around 1983, when a "youth shooting crew" with several 1982 graduates from Beijing Film Academy (or BFA, China's only film school) [1] made a film called *One and Eight*.[2] The film had a limited release, but stunned audiences—mostly in-circle filmmakers and critics—with its bold composition of images in each and every frame.

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[1] In Semsel's *Chinese Film*, "Beijing *Dianying Xueyuan*" was translated as Beijing Film Institute. I will use the more popular translation of "Beijing Film Academy" adopted by Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei in their *Encyclopedia*.

[2] Chronologically, *Red Elephant* (1982) by Zhang Jianya, Xie Xiaojing, and Tian Zhuangzhuang, and *A Probation Member* (1983), by Wu Ziniu and Chen Lu were the first two films directed by fifth-generation

Zhang Junzhao directed the film, but according to many critics, it is Zhang Yimou's camerawork that clearly marked the birth of a new film form.

A wave of works by other 1982 BFA graduates followed, comprising Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* (1984), Hu Mei's *Army Nurse* (1984), Wu Ziniu's *Dove Tree* (1985), Tian Zhuangzhuang's *On the Hunting Ground* (1985) and *Horse Thief* (1986). Though dealing with different subject matters, these films share many elements: simple plots, brief conversations, impressive visuals, and ambiguous ideologies that eliminate black and white interpretations of the films' material. Now these works are considered more than just fifth-generation classics: they are regarded as masterpieces, and their creators are among China's best-known artists around the world.[3]

Looking back to the development of Chinese film culture over the past two decades, it is evident that the Fifth Generation has never abandoned its initial humanistic concerns for the lives and fates of individuals within the context of Confucian culture and communist control. I am convinced that many radical changes in Chinese cinema started with this unique group, whose works have never stopped leading China's cultural development through all sorts of surprising twists and turns—not by importing or imposing new traditions and ideologies, but by opening up current ones to new interpretations.

Concerning the term "Fifth Generation," critics have not maintained a consistent definition. Since Chinese critics rarely discussed film directors in terms of "generation" before the emergence of the Fifth Generation, some think that the term is groundless and should not be used. Others regard the fifth generation as "the first self-conscious art movement in Chinese film history," whose "'death' was announced as early as 1987 when *Red Sorghum* struck the first commercial chord" (Zhang Zhenhua and Zeng Guowei 1; Liu Shusheng 61; Lian Wenguang 85). In this vein, some critics argue that only early works by fifth-generation directors are fifth-generation films.[4]

As for which directors belong to the Fifth Generation, there has been a variety of answers. Some scholars excluded all or some female BFA graduates of 1982 in their discussions on the Fifth

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members. According to Wu Ziniu, people simply ignore them because they are children's film (Jia Leilei and Yang Yuanying 41).

[3] Ten fifth-generation films made the list of "100 Best Chinese Films in the 20th Century" by six famous critics from mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. See the cover story of *Asian Weekly*, December 13-19 (2000): 50-60.

[4] For earlier introduction of the Fifth Generation in English, see Ma Ning, "New Chinese Cinema: A Critical Account of the Fifth Generation" (1987); Alan Stanbrook, "The Flowers in China's Courtyard" (1987); and Tony Rayns, "Chinese Vocabulary" (1989).

Generation.[5] Others count such non-BFA graduates as Huang Jianxing, Zhou Xiaowen, He Ping, Zhang Zeming, Sun Zhou and screenwriter Lu Wei in the Fifth Generation, since their films, in both form and content, share many "common traits" with the 1982 BFA graduates (Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei 165; Zhang Yabin 148). Latecomers among these graduates, including Li Shaohong, Xia Gang, He Qun, and Ning Ying, are sometimes referred to as "post-fifth-generation directors," since their first independent directions came after *Red Sorghum*, which marked the end of the Fifth Generation as a film movement (Pan Ruojian 43; Huang Shixian 28).

Some scholars comment that after *Red Sorghum*, older generations have made their fifth-generation turns at many points, while younger generations now cannot cleanly depart from norms set by fifth-generation classics. Wang Yichuan once proposed the idea of a fuzzy zone where generation division is impossible, since the commercial storm has caused the copying of ideas from award-winning films.[6] Li Yiming announced the Fifth Generation's death in 1996 ("Fin-de-Siécle") but came back to write about the generation in 1998 ("From the Fifth Generation to the Sixth"). It turns out that the Fifth Generation, as both a notion and a group, has outlived all theories about it. Unless otherwise indicated, I consider all filmmakers mentioned above as fifth-generation members and their film works as fifth-generation films.

The history of Chinese cinema is usually divided into four periods.[7] The first period (1905-1949), spanning more than four decades of wars and revolutions, was when the earliest two generations of filmmakers were active. The **first** generation filmmakers, mostly photographers, shot some episodes of Beijing opera and erotic romances dating from 1905 to early 1920s. Amazed by this Western invention, they found film an excellent tool for documentation and entertainment. This moment of history is best represented in Ann Hu's *Shadow Magic* (1999), which I will discuss in the next chapter. The **second** generation members, mostly coming from theatres, are China's early masters whose leftist masterpieces had a great impact on awakening Chinese people to fight for their own well-being during both WWII (against the Japanese) and the civil wars prior to the foundation of the People's Republic in 1949. This generation established a tradition of social-realism and explored film aesthetics by combining techniques of traditional Chinese painting

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[5] During a conversation, I asked Professor Wang Yichuan of Beijing Normal University, an expert of Zhang Yimou film, why it was so. He said that it was difficult to make relevant comparisons between films by female directors and those by male directors. I will come back to this point in Chapter 5.

[6] See Wang Yichuan's "Wudaiqi de Zhongguo Dianying" ["Chinese Film in a Generation-Fusion Era"], which is included as an appendix in his *Zhang Yimou Myth* (1998).

[7] For a more detailed classification that further divides within the four periods in my discussion, see Zhiwei Xiao's historical essay "Chinese Cinema" (Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei 3-30). I basically follow the generation division that most scholars have agreed upon (Semsel, *Chinese Film* 11-14).

and theatre with traits of Hollywood melodrama. A few of them continued to work in the second period of Chinese film history (1949-1966)—also referred to as the 17-year period—during which the **third** generation emerged. Educated under the communist ideology of New China, the third generation produced melodramas showing a strong Soviet influence. These works often involve a double narrative focalization of now and then, representing the lived and still vital experience of the Chinese revolution and the unique productive, social, and political structure of the People's Republic in both its cities and countryside.

After this 17-year period, "film production came almost to a standstill" during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) (Semsel, *Chinese Film* 1). From 1966 to 1971, not a single feature was shot, which is "unprecedented anywhere in the history of the medium" (Xia Hong, "Film Theory" 38). In the chaotic decade when "political hysteria in real life and in the realm of the performing arts became a temporary *norm* [and] the aesthetic organization of films became subordinated to a fascistic logic," film productions produced between 1971 and 1976 were nothing but screen versions of "model plays" (Yau, "Cultural" 7). A model play takes the form of modern Beijing opera. It is a group production with a stereotypical pattern of plot and characterization, and a revolutionary theme that in no way involves such sub-themes as a love relationship.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Western film was "experiencing significant changes both technically and conceptually, [but] Chinese film made little development" (Xia Hong, "Editorial" 3). It was not until the "New Era" began in 1979 that Chinese film finally revived and became known to the world. In the 1980s, the third generation's leading director, Xie Jin, reached the highest point of his career by drawing over 100 million people to *The Legend of Tianyun Mountain* (1980) and *The Hibiscus Town* (1986). The long-awaited **fourth**-generation directors who graduated before the Cultural Revolution, but never had a chance to direct, started to throw one surprise after another at audiences yearning to see true human feelings treated as anything but a blind political frenzy. After a long absence, love stories came back into style.

While the third generation had perfected its particular type of melodrama, the fourth generation felt dissatisfied with this perfection and claimed that it was high time to "throw away the walking stick of drama" and to "modernize the cinematic language" (Bai Jingsheng 9; Zhang Nuanxin and Li Tuo 18). The real breakthrough, however, was not made until the Fifth Generation staged its early works, which were immediately welcomed and praised by filmmakers and critics

who had been looking for a substantive change.[8] From 1983 to 1988, these new filmmakers produced a repertoire of groundbreaking films and proved that an art movement takes a generation, and not just a couple of whiz kids (Zhang Yabin 150). Although other generations of filmmakers in China have also received top awards from major film festivals, their influence is not comparable to that of the Fifth Generation, since they have never committed themselves to a "generation politics," to borrow Zhang Xudong's term, the way fifth-generation members have.[9] Thus, coming to terms with the Fifth Generation is more about understanding it as the result of a generation gap, than searching for its roots in generation continuity.

1.1 Heaven's Chosen Ones

> When Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man, it first exercises his mind with suffering, and his sinews and bones with toil. It exposes his body to hunger, and subjects him to extreme poverty. It confounds his undertakings. By all these methods it stimulates his mind, hardens his nature, and supplies his incompetencies. Men for the most part err, and are afterwards able to reform. They are distressed in mind and perplexed in their thoughts, and then they arise to vigorous reformation. (Legge *Mencius* 929-30)

Quite a few scholars cite this famous passage from the *Works of Mencius* when discussing fifth-generation filmmakers, implying two things about them: they are chosen to achieve a great success, but only after encountering great suffering (Chen Mo, *Chen Kaige* 91; Wang Yichuan, *Zhang Yimou* 19). For fifth-generation members, the suffering was caused by Cultural Revolution, which the Chinese now consider "a historical error." The "great office" that Heaven has conferred on them, however, seems to be manifold.

Fifth-generation members themselves believe that they are "Heaven's chosen ones," an idiom used in a poem Chen Kaige delivered to his FBA schoolmates during a reunion in 1992 (Chen Mo, *Chen Kaige* 3). Almost all of them were born in the 1950s[10] and experienced the Cultural Revolution as adolescents. Many were among millions of "intellectual youths," or unlucky

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[8] Many filmmakers and critic-scholars participated in the debate over the innovation of cinematic language in the early 1980s. Xia Hong has a good summary of various opinions ("Film Theory in the People's Republic"). For broader reviews of the socio-cultural context in which the Fifth Generation emerged, see Ni Zhen, *Reform and Chinese Film* (1994) and Shao Mujun's "Chinese Film Amidst the Tide of Reform."

[9] Some fourth-generation members, for instance, see the "Fourth Generation" as a term counted back from the "fifth" and thus not very meaningful. Others point out that the term "Fourth Generation" is not appropriate, since this "generation" has a larger number of directors than all other generations, and they are from very different backgrounds (Huang Jianzhong 264).

teenagers sent down to the countryside for reeducation.[11] Their relationships with local officials, peasants, and fellow team members, their experiences of the harsh environment, material poverty, and physical labor, their feelings of loneliness, and the fear that they would be exiled forever are represented in a literary genre that blossomed immediately following those chaotic years: intellectual-youth literature. The term overlaps with a more popular term, "scar literature," which is about psychic traumas during the ten disastrous years of extreme dictatorship and destruction.

Some of the youths that were sent down to the country married local peasants and stayed there. Most managed to return to the cities, but found that others could not comprehend what they had experienced. As victims of a "historical error," their feelings towards homecoming are similar to that of American veterans who came back from Vietnam. Oliver Stone said to a reporter of *Los Angeles Times*: "You come back, you can't sit in a room and talk. Your value system is different. You've seen things at the dirtiest level. And people sit there, and they're mostly hypocrites" (Balzar 9). Many fifth-generation members belonged to the category of "educable kids" from "bad families," and their experiences of the Cultural Revolution were filled with astonishment and perplexity. However, compared to numerous back-to-city youths who find themselves in a lose-lose situation, and forever having to catch up with the change occurring there,[12] fifth-generation members are indeed the lucky ones. They found inspiration in their unfortunate experiences and have managed to create, persistently and flamboyantly, an ideology of their own in film language. As mass-media reportage has it, after 1977, these Heaven's chosen ones had things coming their way.

First of all, they were very lucky to get into the BFA in 1978. When universities reopened in 1977 after a ten-year break, the competition was fierce: thousands of sent-down youths, together with the high school graduates that had accumulated in the past decade, all attempted to "struggle along a single-plank bridge leading to the gates of universities" (Chen Mo, *Zhang Yimou* 16). At the time, getting into a university was the best way for those young exiles to regain their lost

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[10] The only exception here is female director Liu Miaomiao, who was born in 1962. She was one of the eight female students among a total of twenty-seven students in the directing class.

[11] The number of youths sent down at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution (from 1966 to 1968) is close to 8 million. While almost all of those born between 1951 and 1953 were sent down, from 1968 to 1975, many youths with connections managed to stay in the cities.

[12] Li Shaohong's *Red Suit* (1997) depicts the life of such an "intellectual youth" couple. After years of taking pride as a factory worker, the husband is suddenly laid off in his 40s. First he is not able to tell his wife that he is laid off. He leaves home with a lunch box in the morning as usual and wonders around during the day, which reminds us of John Travolta's role in *Mad City* (1997). He tries a job as a bathroom attendant at a Five-Star hotel, but he almost beats up a guest because he cannot stand the latter's

registration in city residencies and obtain secured jobs upon graduation. Becoming students of the prestigious BFA program was a dream come true for the 153 freshmen of 1978.

When they graduated in 1982, they found that having a BFA degree meant more than having a college education. The university diploma was a ticket for them to enter the intellectual circles, which had begun to gain increasing respect after the "cultureless" Cultural Revolution.[13] Regarded as *intellectual artists*, Fifth-generation members were expected to represent the nation's spirit and carry on its cultural tradition, but it was impossible for them to play the role of orthodox successors to the "great" cultural tradition of China because of their education. Besides missing out on a secondary education, they had also been exposed to an unstable and incoherent political climate in their teenage years. Additionally, even the university education they received was unconventional.

Many fourth-generation directors learned from Soviet models at the BFA before the academy was closed in 1966. When the academy reopened in 1977, the professors no longer knew how, or what, to teach. Thus, students were given the opportunity for many free discussions and screening sessions, where they became familiar with such European masters as François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Ingmar Bergman, Bernardo Bertolucci, and Michaelangelo Antonioni among others, whose works were unknown in China until the late 1970s. The rather open atmosphere at the BFA was beneficial to its 1978 students, who also used the opportunity to study various European film theories, including those of André Bazin and Sergei Eisenstein. During their university years, Bazin's long-shot theory had been highly appreciated by fourth-generation directors who began to show their strength as "academic" filmmakers, and who started a heated debate on the modernization of film language (Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 6). The lively class discussions later became a habit for future fifth-generation filmmakers and, even now, it is still a practice for many of them to invite the entire crew for brainstorming.

Upon completion of their study, the 1982 BFA graduates were assigned to film studios all over China. Zhang Junzhao, Zhang Yimou, and He Qun were assigned to the remote Guangxi Film Studio (near the Vietnam border). At first, the young men felt once again dismissed from the center, but they soon learned that they had indeed received a blessing. Wei Bida, then director of the

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humiliating attitude. Then he is not able to tell his wife for days that he quit the hotel job until his wife finds him repairing bicycles in the street.

[13] One of the slogans during the Cultural Revolution is that "the more knowledge one has, the more reactionary one is." As a result, almost all teachers were subject to students' denunciation meetings. Many fourth generation filmmakers who graduated from BFA around 1963 "were laughed at by the

Studio, accepted their ambitious proposal to form a Youth Filming Crew and allocated a few hundred thousands Renminbi (1 RMB=1/3 USD) for them to make *One and Eight* (1983). When this news came to the Xiaoxiang Film Studio in Sichuan province, another BFA graduate, Wu Ziniu, also received support to lead a youth crew and shoot *A Probation Player* (1983).

After completing *One and Eight*, Guangxi Film Studio invited director Chen Kaige (Beijing Film Studio) to join cameraman Zhang Yimou and art designer He Qun to shoot the renowned *Yellow Earth* (1984). These early runners of the Fifth Generation were lucky to start from smaller studios where they did not have to line up after famous directors or to work as assistants, which was a common practice since even FBA students could not get much hands-on experience in school.[14] More importantly, directors of smaller studios gave the newcomers the chance to work with their peers who shared similar film concepts, making it possible for them to create what scholars often call a "shock wave" in Chinese cinema.

Most fourth-generation directors had not been as fortunate because they had been required to work as assistants and were unable to use their precious raw impulses to conjure up fantastic cinematic creations (Wu Guanping, "Experiencing" 95). Zhang Yimou, Tian Zhuangzhuang, Huang Jianxin, Zhou Xiaowen, and He Ping were all fortunate to receive support from Wu Tianming, the former director of Xian Film Studio. Without Wu Tianming's trust and support, the making of *Black Canon Incident* (1985), *Horse Thief* (1986), *Red Sorghum* (1987), *The Price of Frenzy* (1988), *Double Flag Town* (1990), and other films that are now regarded as fifth generation classics, would not have been possible.

Fifth-generation filmmakers were also lucky to catch "the last train when the film industry was still a state-owned business"[15] and make art films with studio funding and equipment (Zhang Yabin 161). In 1993, when the State finally ceased to sponsor most film studios (except for August First and Children's Film Studios), fifth-generation directors had already established their reputation through film festival victories. Their fame helped to bring in investments to their films, and enabled them to make the transition rather smoothly. Compared to most sixth-generation members, who graduated from the BFA around 1990 and had to rely on independent financing when they were no bodies, the Fifth Generation was very lucky indeed.

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working professionals as 'people who could only talk'" about film, though it is only because they had little creative opportunity when China was producing 30 or so features per year (Semsel, *Chinese Film* 8).

[14] Xie Fei, former vice president of FBA, expressed envy about "the diverse curriculum Ohio University offers because students there can explore the entire medium and define their relationship to it" (Semsel, *Chinese Film* 10).

The Fifth Generation's impact on Chinese and world cinema has been greater than that of directors in the Hong Kong New Wave and Taiwan New Cinema, who rose from the late-1970s to mid-1980s after a long apprenticeship in making commercial films or TV dramas.[16] Such mainland directors as Feng Xiaogang, Ye Daying, and Feng Xiaoning, who do not belong to any numbered generation and set their eyes on the market from the start, are also less influential in the international arena than fifth-generation directors. Their goal was not to initiate a film movement, but to make box office hits—each director with a unique approach. Feng Xiaogang's *hesui* (New Year's greeting) comedies, *Part A Part B* (1997), *Be There Be Square* (1998), and *Sorry Baby* (1999), made the top three lists of the box office records in 1998, 1999, and 2000.[17] Feng Xiaoning's war films with Western protagonists who narrate the stories, *Red River Valley* (1997) and *Lover's Grief over the Yellow River* (1999), also made the top five lists of 1997 and 1999. Ye Daying's *Red Cherry* (1995), an engaging tale that takes place in Russia during the World War II, topped the box office record of 1995.

Moreover, fifth-generation filmmakers emerged at a time, when Hong Kong and Taiwan filmmakers were updating their film concepts and calling for groundbreaking works in Chinese language film circles.[18] The initial recognition of the Fifth Generation actually came from Hong Kong film critics, who included *Yellow Earth* in the Ten-Best list of 1985. The success of *Yellow Earth* initiated Hong Kong's involvement in promoting mainland filmmakers and bringing in investments, thereby making it possible for bigger budget productions and better postproduction conditions.

Early works of the Fifth Generation also excited Japanese critic-directors like Oshima Nagisa, a former New Waver and close observer of the development in Chinese cinema. As a result, fifth-generation directors managed to obtain investment and support in post-production and distribution from Japan as well. Working with producers from outside also enabled Chinese

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[15] A good introduction to Chinese film industry and administration system can be found in Semsel's *Chinese Film* (2-6).

[16] Famous Taiwan director Hou Hsian-Hsien and Hong Kong director Ann Hui both talked about such experiences respectively in Olivier Assayas' documentary *HHH: Portrait de Hou Hsiao-Hsien* (1997) and Ann Hui's documentary *As Time Goes By* (1996).

[17] Feng Xiaogang is one of China's most successful commercial film directors. His *Be There Be Square*, for instance, earned 43 million (RMB) on a 1.3 million budget (http://www.usc.edu/isd/archieves/asianfilm/china/square.html) and became one of the top grossing film in China. For the director's views on filmmaking, see Michael Keane and Tao Dongfeng's "Interview with Feng Xiaogang."

[18] The generation division in Taiwan cinema, according to Chen Feibao, is comparable to that of the mainland. Taiwan's Fourth Generation represented by Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward Yang shares many views with the Fifth Generation.

filmmakers to learn about the trends in world cinema and potential international markets, thus acquiring the knowledge necessary to promote Chinese film in a larger venue.

In addition to the above points, the Fifth Generation, as I mentioned earlier, updated Chinese film-concepts during the same period when mass media in China was moving into a new stage. Stories of these "Heaven's chosen ones" with artistic visions unfamiliar to most Chinese became the center of media coverage. The best example of this came from reports on Zhang Yimou, whose filming process, social activities, and personal life have all been covered by various media—from TV interviews to fashion magazines. In fact, Zhang Yimou has such a "star effect" in both China and overseas that his name alone ensures a good readership. Such attention from the mass media in turn was very helpful in filling the void commonly taken up by marketing specialists in mainland China where the distribution systems are not yet sophisticated enough to manage publicity on their own. With its powerful influence, the mass media has actually helped lift bans on some fifth-generation works, as well as stimulate scholarly studies that attempt to uncover the secrets of the generation's success.

1.2 Rebel with Cause: A Passion far from Primitive

> It is widely agreed among critics that the new cinema of the Fifth Generation has a deep impact with its rebellious consciousness. Its reflection upon history is iconoclastic, anti-superstition, countermyth and countertradition. Fifth generation films attempt to look at the root of our culture and reality, which is what characterizes true intellectual films. [...] The Fifth Generation broke the traditional norm of thinking from many perspectives and evoked heated discussions and debates. (Feng Min 484-5)

Many critics first sensed the rebellious consciousness in the striking visuals of fifth-generation films. The debut work of the generation, Zhang Yunzhao's *One and Eight* (1983), is about a group of prisoners comprised of one wronged communist soldier and eight bad guys: a troop of three bandits, three army deserters, a Japanese spy, and a landlord. On their way to the location of their trial, they encounter Japanese soldiers, fight bravely, and most of them give their lives for their national pride. The film gave its audience a visual shock that was more than "unfamiliar." Many shots seem to be either oversimplified or incomplete, presenting sculpturesque human figures against a background that is little more than a void. Thus the overall visual effect of the film reveals a "decentred composition" with a "monochromatic color scheme" that resembles "the look of woodcuts" (Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei 257). When talking about the making of the film, cinematographer Xiao Feng affirms the crew's countertradition consciousness:

> We had a strong intuition to reject all traditions, including the academic and especially the petty bourgeois. We could not be possibly more against tradition. You thought of a scene for us to discuss, and someone suddenly said, this is similar to a scene in another film. Okay, this scene was killed. If anyone among the four of us [that is, Zhang Juzhao, Zhang Yimou, He Qun, and I] thought of something that was similar to anything one of us had seen, that thought was not allowed to appear in *One and Eight*. This refers not only the plot design, but also everything else. We did not have any theoretical guidance, so we relied on intuitions only. (Bai Xiaoding 30)

It was the deliberate shift away from conventions more than the visuals that was so shocking for Chinese film circles. Many later fifth-generation films share methods and ideas from this initial exploration.

The second feature film of the Fifth Generation, Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* (1984), which portrays the barren loess plateau and the muddy Yellow River that gave birth to the Chinese nation, was a bigger success. Set in the 1940s, the film follows the path of an Eight-Route Army soldier to Northern Shaanxi as he collects the sonorous folk songs to remake them into army tunes. He stays with a poor peasant family, where the father has to marry his teenage daughter to a much older man in order to use the betrothal gifts to purchase a bride for his boy. The soldier cannot help luring them with a picture of exciting changes in the South (or Yan'an), which encourages the girl to run away from her arranged marriage. She loses her life while attempting to cross the Yellow River for the purpose of joining the army. Again, the landscape is composed in a way previously unseen: with the yellow earth occupies more than three quarters of many frames, the human figures are often very small. The film presents a warm yellow (instead of the traditional green) in the cinematic landscapes, which touches the hearts of audiences, especially those of Chinese origin. As the cameraman of both films, Zhang Yimou won more awards than the two directors, which was a rare case at the time in China since people used to care more about the content than the looks of a film.

Most critics agree that these early works of the Fifth Generation "hammer away at the traditional viewing habits" of Chinese audiences by giving precedence to visuals over didactic narratives (Xia Hong, "Debate" 46; Wang Shuo, *Ignorant* 4); but opinions are divided on whether this is a good or a bad thing. While some critics welcomed these new films as artistic creations that updated film-concepts, others accused them of depending too much on the visuals and failing to offer ideological clarity. When looking at the plot behind the striking visuals, one cannot miss the fact that both films depart from norms of the revolutionary/war genre with their intention to

provoke or subvert communist teachings rather than glorify them or enlighten with them. *One and Eight* portrays "bandits and other Communist prisoners as capable of heroism" (Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei 256); and *Yellow Earth* implies that the Eight-Route Army soldier is partially responsible for the death of the girl who gives up hope while waiting for his rescue (Rao Shuoguang and Pei Yali 94).

Following these two films, works from other fifth-generation directors continued to challenge various aspects of settled norms. Hu Mei's *Army Nurse* (1985), for instance, digs into the psychology of its protagonist by portraying how visible and invisible rules of the army are imposed on a young woman. She sacrifices her personal love and desire in order to be a good soldier, but then finds herself marrying an officer approved by her superior. She turns things over in her mind, and finally chooses to leave her fiancé. Wu Ziniu, a fifth-generation specialist of war films, repeatedly lets his characters face the choice between patriotism and humanitarianism, while creating circumstances that make the choices difficult. Considering how previous generations made every effort to make their films politically correct, the Fifth Generation makes a political statement with an indifferent attitude towards politics. This is quite similar to the claim made by Chinese avant-garde writers of the 1980s (Lu Tonglin, *Misogyny* 15).

If the films mentioned above present a new way to negotiate between aesthetics and ideology, Tian Zhuangzhuang's *On the Hunting Ground* (1985) and *Horse Thief* (1986) rebel in another direction by rejecting any unsolicited interpretations. *Film Art*'s editorial held a debate over *Horse Thief* in the belief that the work is a valuable exploration that deserves better understanding (Xia Hong, "Debate" 39-49). Set in Inner Mongolia and Tibet respectively, the two films create a genre of their own, blending the minority protagonists' subjective visions and a Han director's subjective interpretation. The unfamiliar visuals and storytelling alienate the audiences much more than other earlier fifth-generation works, while the folk customs, especially the religious rituals of the Tibetans, construct "a difficult riddle, not only for [the ordinary] audience, but also for theorists and critics" (39). In the debate, director Tian Zhuangzhuang and scriptwriter Zhang Rui confronted critics who found it too difficult to make sense of the story. The filmmakers said that they attempted to tell a story that is both "national" and "personal" (44), but very few could get the story.[19] Later when Tian Zhuangzhuang was asked to explain *Horse Thief* and *On the Hunting Ground*, he simply replied that they "are shot for audiences of the next century," which has become an (in)famous hallmark statement of the Fifth Generation (Wang Shuo, *Ignorant* 4).

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[19] See Dru C. Gladney's "Tian Zhuangzhuang, the Fifth Generation, and Minority Film in China."

Tian Zhuangzhuang was the first among mainland writers and filmmakers, who "spelled out loud and clear the intention to keep a distance from the masses" (4), but he is not alone at setting his films in marginal areas and dealing with marginal issues. From 1983 to 1990, his BFA peers including Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, and He Ping all set their films in the estranged rural land of the Western China—Northwest or Southwest. Paul Clark points out that by presenting harsh landscapes of rural or minority areas unfamiliar to urban Chinese audiences, the Fifth Generation succeeds in "reinventing China" ("Reinventing" 121-36). Here, reinvention is not merely relocation, since the frequent use of the marginal figures' point of view in fifth-generation films contributes to the estrangement of China and Chinese ways and thus deconstructs stereotypical presentations of the nation and traditional interpretations of its culture.

The more comprehensible rebellions in fifth-generation films, as many scholars have observed, are acted out in various forms of disagreement between fathers and sons or old men and young men. In Chen Kaige's *Life on a String* (1991), a fable about two blind wandering musicians, we see a master at least in his sixties and a disciple in his teens. The master believes what his master told him: there is a prescription hidden in the back of his instrument, which can cure his eyes, but only on the difficult condition that 1000 strings are broken when he plays. The old man tries to make his young disciple believe what he believes, but the young man says that he does not care how many strings can be broken. When the master finally has 1000 broken strings in hand, he takes the prescription to a pharmacy. There he is told that the prescription is nothing but a blank piece of paper. He dies shortly afterwards without seeing a ray of light in his life. Before he dies, however, the master tells the young man that he has made a mistake and he should have broken 1200 strings: in this way the young man does not have a chance to discover that what he was told is a lie. Although the young man disagrees with his master all the time, he feels the old man's agony in finding the ultimate truth. The director perceives the "great" tradition of China through the young man and offers a poignant critique of the "tradition" in general.

Life on a String offers a rather in-depth philosophical reflection, but I must stress that it is not alone in reflecting the father-son relationship in both realistic and symbolic meanings via the medium of film. In fact, Hong Kong directors Allen Fong and Wong Kar-wai, as well as major Taiwan directors including Hou Hisao-hisen, Ang Lee, Edward Yang, and Malaysian born Tsai Ming-liang, have all depicted this relationship in their films. In Stanley Kwan's documentary *Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Film*, interviews with these directors and clips from their films are put into a chapter titled "Fathers Are Everywhere." The Fifth Generation and its Hong Kong/Taiwan

peers cannot avoid dealing with the parent-child (mostly father-son) relationship, since by reflecting upon issues of nation and tradition, they have no choice but to confront the patriarchal social order they grew up with.

What makes fifth-generation films stand out, however, is the insistence on the role of the rebellious young woman who dares to pursue her own love, to rebel by giving up her virtue, and to trade her sexuality for a sense of freedom and liberation from the oppression and exploitation imposed upon her. Chen Kaige's *Life on a String* and *Temptress Moon* (1996), He Ping's *Red Firecracker, Green Firecracker* (1993) and Zhou Xiaowen's *The Emperor's Shadow* (1997) all have such women. The master of this line of films, however, is Zhang Yimou, whose *Red Sorghum*, *Ju Dou* (1990), *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), and *Shanghai Triad* (1995) created the "new image" of Chinese women, all played by China's best known star in the world, Gong Li.[20]

In *Red Sorghum*, a young woman, Jiu'er, is married to an old but rich leper by her father in exchange for betrothal gifts including a big mule. The head sedan carrier at first teases her and then saves her on the way to the leper's house. Jiu'er keeps the leper away with a pair of scissors during her wedding night and gives herself to the sedan carrier in the sorghum field the next day. When she returns from a short trip to her parents' home, the leper is killed. The sedan carrier comes to take over both the woman and the leper's wine factory. They have a happy life until the Japanese arrive and kill many people including Jiu'er.

Ju Dou tells the story of the title character, a young woman abused every night by her impotent husband Jinshan, the owner of a dyeing mill, who blames her for not giving him a son. During the day, Ju Dou works in the mill with Jinshan's nephew, Tianqing, who is attracted to her and often peeps at her through a hole in the stall wall while she is washing. When Ju Dou discovers his presence, she is surprised and angry, but before long she decides to reveal her bruised body to him in hope of getting help. Tianqing cannot kill Jinshan who is suddenly paralyzed in an accident, and does not dare to claim his illegitimate son, Tianbai, for fear of being punished by the clan. The actual patricide is carried out by the child Tianbai, who drowns his nominal father Jinshan by accident. Later, he intentionally kills his real father, Tianqing, after finding him with Ju Dou in a cave.

In *Raise the Red Lantern*, Songlian is married into the Chen's family as the fourth mistress. Master Chen's son is attracted to, and feels much sympathy with, his father's young wife of his own age, but he is too weak to challenge the father's authority. The result of Songlian's rebellion is

her own madness. In *Shanghai Triad*, the young man is the "Second Master" of a gang who intends to replace the "Old Master." He has a relationship with the Old Master's young and beautiful mistress, who attempts to escape her fate of belonging to the old man forever, by giving herself to the young man and participating in his plot of killing the old man. In the end, the old man kills both the young man and the young woman as an unfaithful gang member and an adulterous woman.

Although patricide is not always involved in above films, a triangular relationship among an old man, his young wife/mistress and a young man is always present. The young man's intention to kill the old man and "marry" his wife/mistress remind many scholars of the Oedipus story (Rao Shuoguang and Pei Yali 219). Wang Yichuan reads Zhang Yimou films in terms of a conflict between "the traditional father" and "the contemporary self," and points out that the conflict can never be easily resolved since the impulse of patricide and the intention of root-seeking are always intertwined (*Zhang Yimou* 95).

Dai Jinhua regards the patricide theme as something inherited from the Cultural Revolution and out of the ruins of history and culture (*Landscape* 25). She points out that it was during the Red Guard Movement, or the first stage of Cultural Revolution, that fifth-generation members first took part in a large-scale patricide, not just symbolically.[21] The movement was a historical spectacle in which millions of teenagers were convinced that they were the orthodox successors of revolution in new China and pointed their "spearheads" at their fathers' generation. The movement was a "carnival of the sons" with two seemingly contradictory aspects. On one hand, there is the incarnation of a God, a Father, whose *absolute authority* was beyond any doubt: Mao Zedong.[22] On the other hand, members of the fathers' generation, especially those in power or with authority, were identified as new enemies, spokesmen of the capitalists or barriers of revolution. In other

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[20] The two had such a famous partnership that their break-up after *Shanghai Triad* was shocking news to the Chinese, but a more shocking one to Western media as reported by *Variety* in February 1995.

[21] For detailed accounts of Red Guards' experiences during the Cultural Revolution, see Gordon A. Bennett and Ronald N. Montaperto, *Red Guard: The Political Biography of Dao Hsiao-ai* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971); Ken Ling, *The Revenge of Heaven: Journal of a Young Chinese* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1972); Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro, *Son of the Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1984); Gao Yuan, *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1987); Fulang Lo, *Morning Breeze: A True Story of China's Cultural Revolution* (San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals, 1989); Luo Zi-ping, *A Generation Lost: China under the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Avon, 1990); Zhai Zhenhua, *Red Flowers of China* (New York: Soho Press, 1992); and Anchee Min, *Red Azalea* (New York: Pantheon, 1994).

[22] In popular terms, people had to reveal "three loyalties" (including being loyal to Chairman Mao, his thoughts, and his revolutionary theory) and "four infinities" (meaning to worship him with infinite love, infinite loyalty, infinite belief and infinite adoration).

words, fathers and the tradition they inherited, became subjects of execution and destruction carried out under the banner of "rebel has a cause." This slogan, which reminds Westerners of James Dean's famous 1951 film "Rebel without a Cause," comes from Mao's work, in which he writes, "there are thousands of principles in Marxist theories, but the essence of all is one: rebel has a cause" (Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 25-6). I agree with Dai Jinhua that this slogan, as well as the rebellious spirit behind it, never disappeared either with the death of Mao or the end of Cultural Revolution.[23]

While becoming a "Red Guard" was an honor for high school students at the time, most fifth-generation members never qualified to become orthodox Red Guards since they had "problematic fathers." Such youths from "black families" were put into the category of "reformable sons and daughters" and were encouraged to "draw a clear line" separating them from their families. Thus, the marginal identity of most fifth-generation members was already determined in their juvenile years (28). Even though some "reformable kids" did try to denounce their parents, they were still rejected by those "orthodox revolutionary successors." As grown-ups, they are still haunted by memories of the fear of being excluded by the crowd, as described by two fifth-generation directors' autobiographies: Chen Kaige's *Young Kaige* (1990) and Peng Xiaolian's *Their Story, Their Time* (2000). Eventually, these directors managed to turn the imposed marginal identity to their advantage through the creation of "off track" art pieces. Peter Hitchcock calls their art "the aesthetics of alienation," seeing "alienation" as "a condition of possibility, not the only one to be sure, but a significant one in understanding the emergence of a counter-hegemonic cultural practice within the very aegis of what it opposes" (117).

With such "deep habits of ideology-criticism" (Chow, *Primitive Passion* 163), fifth-generation films have never ceased confronting censorship in China, which is controlled by leaders at the studio and the Film Bureau at the state level. It took two years and many changes for the crew of *One and Eight* to "clear the workings of film censorship," but the film still "had a limited release and was banned from export until 1987" (Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei 257). Zhang Yimou's *Ju Dou* and *Raise the Red Lantern* were banned on the mainland until his *Story of Qiu Ju* (1992) pleased everyone from government officials to film critics in China, and took the Golden Lion at Venice International Film Festival. Similarly, Chen Kaige's *Farewell, My Concubine*

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[23] Some scholars may suggest that the May Fourth tradition was also a rebellious one that has continued to influence Chinese writers and artists into the 1980s and 1990s. In Lu Tonglin's *Misogyny*, for instance, four avant-garde Chinese writers are discussed after an examination of Lu Xun. For most fifth-generation

(1992) was not shown in China until it took the Palm d'Or at Cannes in 1993. Tian Zhuangzhuang's *Blue Kite* (1993) has never been openly released on the mainland because the film deals directly with the successive political movements from 1953 to the start of the Cultural Revolution and was submitted to international film festivals without the Film Bureau's permit.[24] The director was also prohibited from making films until 1996, so Tain Zhuangzhuang started the Beijing Pegase Cultural Communication Center and began to help younger filmmakers to produce independent films (Huang Shixian 29).[25]

A complete list of seriously censored and banned films by fifth-generation directors would not be much shorter than the list of their entire repertoire. Although the mass-media coverage of fifth-generation stories is usually very extensive, we find little about why these films are censored. Only from footnotes of some "in-circle" critic-scholars, do we learn fragmentary details. For instance, from the more than one hundred changes that *One and Eight* had to make, one concerns the fate of a teenage army nurse (Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 30). In the original version, a bandit kills her with his last bullet to prevent her from being raped by Japanese soldiers. In the final version approved by the censorship board, the bandit and the nurse fight together to defeat the Japanese (49).[26] The version I watched, however, seems to be the "original version," because the army nurse is killed by the Chinese bandit.

The above discussions on fifth-generation films' patricide theme and ideological ambiguity, which has constantly caused problems with the censorship, are only a few examples of the Fifth Generation's *rebellious consciousness*. My later discussion will go into more details with how this consciousness (enacted through "primitive passions") implies a *passion far from primitive*, which aims at dismantling the kind of ideology that lays bare "rights" and "wrongs." Through its rebellions, the Fifth Generation has answered calls from the mass media for new dimensions of cultural discussions.

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directors whose school years did not give them a chance to be well versed in May Fourth literature and film, however, the rebellious spirit was more from Mao.

[24] Also from some curators, we learned that a number of films from fifth and younger generation directors are banned in China since they did not get permission from the Film Bureau before participating in international film festivals. Sometimes, bans can be lifted after the director pays a fine upon his/her return to Beijing, which is practiced to "save face" for Chinese officials.

[25] See Jonathan Crow, "Tian Zhuangzhuang (Biography)," *All Movie Guide*, http://movies.yahoo.com/shop?d=hc&id=1800146325&cf=bios

[26] The story in the *Encyclopedia* by Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei is that more than 70 changes were made, and that the bandit is killed by the Japanese trying to save the nurse (257). Peggy Chiao also mentions that 70 changes have been made (*Dialogues* 39).

2. Tripartite Negotiations in China's Film Circle and Mass Media

Now that we have located the Fifth Generation within Chinese film history and described its basic characteristics, the following discussion will contextualize it in the larger picture of China's popular culture during the 1980s and 1990s.

The 1980s was a time when China's economic growth became perfectly obvious to the world, but its longing for the international recognition of its culture remained an open secret, best summarized by the slogan "walking towards the world," among the Chinese.[27] As a result, the intellectual stratum began to divide: some intellectuals still held on to their positions as "engineers of human souls" while others went straight into all kinds of business. Culturally speaking, some carried on an "enlightenment movement" by promoting Western ideas, while others joined in the "root-searching movement" by reflecting their cultural identity through the mirror of a once "overthrown" history or tradition (Huang Huilin and Yin Hong 194). By the mid-1980s, both movements bore fruit in terms of art and literature, and the Chinese started to enjoy continuous "cultural feasts" after years of spiritual starvation. The fifth-generation film, the avant-guard fiction, the Newly Born Generation poems, and the 1985 Oil Painting Exhibition, were a few examples under the banner of "elite culture."

What was considered "popular culture" in Mainland China during the 1980s were in fact products imported from the other regions: Mandarin pop songs, Qiong Yao's romantic fictions, and romantic TV dramas came from Taiwan, while Cantonese songs, kungfu films and TV dramas, and Jin Yong's swordsman fictions arrived from Hong Kong. Mainland Chinese could not really differentiate between popular culture and HK-Taiwanese culture until the rise of "native" mainland popular culture around 1988.

The music event that paralleled the emergence of such fifth-generation Westerns[28] as *Yellow Earth*, *Red Sorghum*, and *Swordsman in the Double Flag Town* was a "whirlwind" called *Xibeifeng* (Northwest Wind) that swept across China in 1988. In Chinese, *feng* means both wind and style. Compared to HK-Taiwan pop music at the time, *Xibeifeng* mixes sonorous elements of northern folk song and regional opera with a rock and roll beat. It expresses feelings of love and loss in a bold, candid, and unconstrained way through rather colloquial, yet vivid, lyrics. The title

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[27] For a discussion on how this slogan is perceived in the development of literature, see Michael Duke's 1991 article "Walking towards the World."

[28] For a more detailed account of Chinese "Westerns," see Chen Yuxin and Chen Xiaoyun, "On the Mythic Consciousness of Westerns."

song of *Red Sorghum*, written by Zhang Yimou and the Fifth Generation's flagship composer Zhao Jiping, is now regarded as a representative work of *Xibeifeng* (Huang Huilin and Yin Hong 196).

If we have to single out a singer whose rebellious consciousness matches that of early fifth-generation films, it must be Cui Jian, whose album, entitled *Rock'n'Roll on the Way of the New Long March*, gained immense popularity among young audiences. Cui Jian is the singer-songwriter who established "China Rock." His songs blend Rap elements with soulful lyrics that depict feelings of confusion and powerlessness in a time of drastic change. His band sometimes uses an ancient Chinese instrument like the zither (that modern bands do not use) in addition to various instruments disseminated from the West.[29] His musical persona is a lonely, penniless young man who keeps walking without a clear direction or a particular cause but with a yearning at heart. He appears to many audiences as a heroic anti-hero and a unique cultural rebel, though he has never been crowned a "cultural hero" as have director Zhang Yimou and writer Wang Shuo, perhaps because he resisted commercialization too fiercely. In this sense, Cui Jian is similar to Tian Zhuangzhuang, who has always been reluctant to adjust his artistic standards for commercial or political reasons even though this meant giving up filmmaking.

Debates over art or money, and *ya* (cultural or refined) or *su* (vulgar), begun in the late 1980s have never stopped, involving artists, critics, and the everyday reader. As I mentioned earlier, mass media provide a ground for such debates, in which the intellectuals are divided according to their attitudes towards popular and commodity culture. Among fifth-generation filmmakers, Zhang Yimou was the first to make strategic adjustments under market pressure. In 1986, when Wu Tianming gave him the chance to direct, he felt an urge to make money for Xian Film Studio because *Horse Thief* lost 700,000 RMB and left the studio in debt. It turned out that *Red Sorghum* made more than money: it made history by winning the first major international award in Chinese film history.

The success of *Red Sorghum* encouraged Chen Haosu, Associate Minister of Culture who was in charge of film, to make a clarion call for "entertainment films," which became another cultural event of 1988 (Wang Shuo, *Ignorant* 11). The proposal was warmly welcomed by the veteran film critic Shao Mujun, a Chinese expert on Hollywood films, who overtly suggested that entertainment was indeed the true essence and goal of film, and that *Red Sorghum* was a good example of entertainment film (Rao and Pei 99-100). Instead of settling the disagreement between

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[29] Sixth-generation director Zhang Yuan has made several music videos featuring Cui Jian and his band between 1989 and 1996. In *Electronic Snow and City Gates*, for instance, *guqin* (an older type of zither) is used while the gate of the Forbidden City is in the background.

art for art's sake and art for profit, Shao Mujun's comments simply initiated a new round of discussion and criticism to that he was giving in to commercialization. In fact, before *Red Sorghum*, a wave of entertainment films including Zhang Huajun's *The Mysterious Buddha* (1980) and Zhang Xinyan's *Shaolin Temple* (1982) attracted and excited many audiences, though they were attacked by most critics on the rationale that art always suffers when money talks.

While reviewing the film journals and magazines published both inside and outside China, I found that mainland critic-scholars who see themselves as true successors to elite Chinese culture resist the popular, or commodity, culture more firmly than any other group of intellectuals. Those who never "got down to the sea of business" (or *xiahai*), could talk about audience reception after watching a difficult art film like *Horse Thief*, or insist on artistic pursuits and cultural values when criticizing films suited to the taste of the masses. These supporters of elite culture simply cannot accept the fact that since the 1990s most Chinese filmmakers, who were once intellectual artists, have more or less made the "commercial turn;" but film is also an industry in which every director has to deal with the same survival issues.

Fifth-generation director Zhou Xiaowen was the first to answer Chen Haosu's call with two thrillers that succeeded both critically and commercially, *Desperation* (1988) and *The Price of Frenzy* (1989). Even an "uncompromising" director like Tian Zhuangzhuang made *Rock Kids* (1988), an entertainment film aiming at young urban audiences. A number of other films followed in this vein, and by the mid-1990s most fifth-generation directors had turned from art-house to commercial film, yet managed to maintain their artistic standards with an impressive repertoire. As early as 1987, the Fifth Generation's "end" as an art movement was announced "when Red Sorghum struck the first commercial chord" (Zhang Zhenhua and Zeng Guowei 1). Around 1995, when most fifth-generation directors had become commercial filmmakers, scholars like Li Yiming again lamented "the death of the Fifth Generation" ("Fin-de-Siècle"). I think 1995, however, can be regarded as the beginning of the generation's new stage of development.

2.1 Heroes or Prisoners?

The Chinese believe that a nation without heroes is tragic, and therefore "how to configure heroic images has always been an important but puzzling issue in artistic creations" (Chen Xiaoyun and Chen Yuxin 164). The death of Mao Zedong in 1976 marked the collapse of a political and cultural idol for the Chinese, and the end of the disastrous Cultural Revolution, after

which Deng Xiaoping took up the leadership and opened up China to the rest of the world. The heroes of the big screen who were once familiar to most Chinese people disappeared after the Mao period, so for a number of years the Chinese were searching for new heroes that they could look up to. In the late 1980s, Cui Jian's image as a young man who follows only "the yearning in the heart" was heroic to many, but he did not remain a focus of the mass media for long. In 1988, another young man (only 19 years old) set off a heroic journey by touring dozens of cities, telling us to study English and master the computer. He led thousands of listeners in shouting English sentences and encouraged them to build self-confidence for the purpose of "making money internationally." By 1998, he had already updated several editions of his textbook *Crazy English*, visited 60 cities, given over 1000 lectures, and reached an audience of over 13 million people.[30] Asked why he attracted so many audiences, Li Yang quoted the American general Clayton Powell:

> "No matter what country you are from or what your religion is, there is only one touching story on Earth, and that is pulling yourself up by your bootstraps with an unremitting determination, starting from having nothing to being successful." And that is also the most touching part of our cause. [...] Some articles praise [me] Li Yang for having created miracles, but such stories are hardly touching. The easiest way to move people is to tell them that Li Yang was once a very shy boy who felt that he was a good-for-nothing. [...] He failed English exams in three successive terms, but he overcame himself through hard work. His story is about an ordinary person becoming a hero.

Li Yang has not yet become a cultural hero himself, but the truth he discovered appears to be universal. In fact, the mass media loves Zhang Yimou, not only because he achieves so many things, but also because he has a great personal story. He really pulled himself up by his bootstraps. Thus, although the title of cultural hero has been also given to Wang Shuo and Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou is the only "super cultural hero" and his story is retold as a myth.

Before 1988, Zhang Yimou already had a reputation as a prodigy in Chinese film circles. He received prestigious awards for cinematography (*Yellow Earth*) and for acting (*Old Well*, by Wu Tianming, 1985). Yet, many vividly remember *Red Sorghum*'s winning the 1988 Golden Bear at the Berlinale—the first to honor an Asian director. All eleven members of the jury voted for it, and all the major German newspapers showered it with excellent reviews. Its rivals included Oscar winners *Broadcast News* and *Moonstruck*. In short, its success seemed to be very solid. Since most

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[30] All citations of Li Yang are from the documentary *Crazy English* (1998) directed by Zhang Yuan, the best known sixth-generation director.

Chinese were not familiar with international film festivals, Huang Jianzhong, who led the delegation to Berlin, explained the victory by comparing it to major sports events:

> The Berlinale is one of the three biggest film festivals in the world. If Cannes is like the Olympics, Venice the World Championship, then Berlinale is the World Cup. [...] If Akira Kurosawa's winning of the 1951 Golden Lion with *Rashomon* symbolized Japan's entry into world cinema, *Red Sorghum* occupies a position of no less significance. I went to a few other film festivals before and always felt ashamed. What [Chen] Kaige said is very true: Westerners never pay attention to the Chinese. If they say anything good about you, they do it as experts praising high-school students or as a father praising his son. Today, we are finally on equal footing with them; I feel relieved and proud of being Chinese. (Luo Xueying, *Red Rorghum* 55)

Taking into consideration that Chen Kaige went to Cannes with high expectations but ended up with an insulting "Golden Alarm Award" for *King of the Children* (1988), this was apparently the first time the Chinese truly believed that the West had finally been "conquered" by a Chinese artist.

Interestingly, it was a German Bear that helped the Chinese to discover their new Chinese hero, Zhang Yimou: an ambitious artist with a quiet poise, a face resembling a Terra Cotta worrier, and the physique and dark complexion of a typical northern peasant. Many knew him first as Sun Wangquan from his role in *Old Well* (36-7). There he appeared to China in the form of a young peasant who gives up his personal happiness to succeed in digging a water well after many generations had failed. When the screen image of Sun Wangquan and the real life Zhang Yimou overlap, how could the mass media not fall in love with him. The mass media has given him many titles, from "superstar" to "specialist in winning awards," from "the first to step out of China" to "world-class film master."[31] In return, Zhang Yimou has never stopped throwing surprises at us with his selection of interesting themes and his consistent changes in cinematic style. In 1998, he astonished everyone by directing Puccini's opera *Turandot* at the Temple of Peace in Beijing.[32] His

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[31] According to many books on Zhang Yimou, he had a miserable childhood and youth because his father was a Nationalist army officer, who was named as an historical counter-revolutionary. When the Cultural Revolution started, Zhang Yimou was sent down and worked as a peasant for three years before being transferred to a factory where he was a porter for seven years. He liked painting as a child and then became obsessed with photography. The legend persists that he sold his own blood to buy his first still camera, with which he shot a photo that won first prize in a contest. When the BFA reopened for new students in 1977, this 27 year-old was rejected since he was 5 years over the age limit for the cinematography department. He sent a pleading letter with some photographs to Mr. Huang Zhen, then Minister of Culture, who was moved and recommended a special admission for him. After graduating from the BFA, he proved to all that he deserves the recognition he received. See his ex-wife Xiao Hua's *The Unforgettable Past*, Chen Mo's *Zhang Yimou Films*, Wang Yichuan's *The End of Zhang Yimou Myth*, Wang Bin's *A Biographical Sketch of Zhang Yimou*, Luo Xueying's *Red Sorghum: Portrait of Zhang Yimou*, and Li Erwei's *Zhang Yimou Says* for more detailed stories.

[32] See Jia Fu's "Thoughts on the Italian Opera *Turandot* and Sichuan Opera *Tu Lao Duo*."

career has had ups and downs, but his films have never lost money nor missed out on the awards. The wellspring of his luck, even after scholars announced an end to the myth of Zhang Yimou, still somehow persists as a myth to many.[33]

There is one problem, however, behind the long-lingering halo of this cultural hero. The Chinese indeed long for Western recognition of their cultural products; however, in tandem, reluctance of accepting awards from a "Western hegemony" also exists. As I mentioned earlier, Huang Jianzhong compared film festivals to sports events, but a difference remains between the two: if Chinese athletes win gold, everyone is happy; but if Chinese directors win awards, there is still room for critical discussion. For example, most Chinese do not like the idea that many foreign audiences take Zhang Yimou's China for the real China. Critics find that the dominant focus of earlier Zhang Yimou films is on old China, where invented rituals and folk customs engage the audience in stories of beautiful women who fall under the spell of abusive old men. (All the women are played by the stunning Gong Li, whose partnership with Zhang Yimou reminds us of the one between Marlene Dietrich and Josef von Sternberg.) In the early 1990s, criticism of Zhang Yimou's orientalizing the Orient in order to please foreign audiences began to appear, for which he received the title of "postcolonial prisoner" (Zhang Yiwu and Meng Fanhua 3).

Chen Kaige, who did not acquire the title of cultural hero until the critical and financial success of *Farewell, My Concubine* (1993), was not spared being cast into the same new role as Zhang Yimou. Some Chinese critics wrote scornfully about Chen Kaige's failure with *Temptress Moon* (1996) because the film was criticized by Cannes' judges for attempting to please them with the Orientalist stereotypes of women, gangs, and an opium family. Before this, Chen Kaige had been regarded as "China's most Chinese filmmaker," one who always reflected upon philosophical issues in depth, although his films only drew small intellectual audiences (Alvin Lu 72).

Earlier in this chapter, I talked about both filmmakers' roles as cultural rebels. While in history rebels always ended up heroes or prisoners, the case of the Fifth Generation has yet to be settled. Zhang Yimou remains at the center of media focus since he has always saved himself from downfalls. When both *Ju Dou* and *Raise the Red Lanterns* were banned, he made the crowd-pleasing *Story of Qiu Ju* (1993). This film received a Golden Lion and numerous government awards, which helped to lift the ban on the previous two films. When he had a disagreement with the director of the Cannes Film Festival, he withdrew *Not One Less* (1999) from Cannes,

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[33] The concept of "Zhang Yimou myth" first appeared in Wang Yichuan's 1993 essay "Who Directed the Zhang Yimou Myth?" The author elaborated the idea into a book length study on Zhang Yimou titled *The End of Zhang Yimou Myth* in 1998, which spawned many reviews and interviews.

submitted it to Venice and won a second Golden Lion in 1999 (Shu Ton and Zeng Zi 1). The very next year, he won a Silver Bear in Berlin for *The Road Home* (1999), leaving those who predicted his downfall speechless. Hero or prisoner, what matters for the mass media, the film circle, and Chinese popular culture, is that Zhang Yimou is still there.

Perhaps by coincidence, 1988 was the year when another cultural hero Wang Shuo made history: four of his novellas were adapted into films, three directed by fifth-generation members and one by Ye Daying—an independent filmmaker. The Chinese film circle had a "Wang Shuo Year," and critics talked about a new genre called the "Wang Shuo film."[34] If the mass media is largely responsible for composing the Zhang Yimou myth, then Wang Shuo is the king of self-promotion—he seized the chance when entertainment film became popular and soon rose to importance in TV drama production. By 1988, although Wang Shuo had produced a repertoire of novellas and enjoyed a remarkable popularity among young readers, his novellas, written with the shrewd vividness of Beijing dialect, had neither earned him money or an appropriate label.[35] In 1988, Song Chong, former Director of Beijing Film Studio, commented that the Wang Shuo films "are written by a punk and acted by some punks for the purpose of educating a younger generation of punks" (Wang Shuo, *Ignorant* 11). Wang Shuo and his friends were at first offended, but he soon realized that Song Chong's comment recognized the most valuable part of his cultural spirit:

> Song Chong's comment is not exactly a critique over the dregs of popular culture from an official standpoint or an elite cultural standpoint. What he expressed is the fear and disgust towards those dissident cultural spirits. His perspective is one that represents the middle-class values and mainstream popular culture. (12)

Today, we cannot talk about mainland popular culture without mentioning Wang Shuo since he has taken part in so many important film/TV productions from 1988 to 1995. In many cases, he is called a media hero, rather than a cultural hero, because most scholars and elite intellectuals have never recognized his cultural value. By 1992, however, nearly three hundred reporters had interviewed him and ran stories on him and his TV dramas (18).

After a few years' silence, Wang Shuo came back in 2000 with *The Ignorant Is Fearless*, a best-selling essay collection on what he "sees," "reads," and "feels" about contemporary

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[34] Fifth-generation directors Huang Jianxin, Mi Jiashan, and Xia Gang adapted his novellas respectively into *Samsara*, *The Trouble Shooters*, and *Half Flame, Half Brine*. Director Ye Daying adapted his Wang Shuo's novella *Rubber Man* into a film called *Breathing Hard*.

[35] Around the time, Mo Yan was famous for his "magical Chinese stream," Liu Suola and Xu Xing as spokesman of the cynic "lost generation," and Chi Li and Liu Zhenyun for their "New Realistic" novels. See also Geremie Barmé, "Wang Shuo and *Liumang* ('Hooligan') Culture."

literature and popular culture. The most insightful essays are those reflecting upon his own encounters with elite cultural circles and why he end up a major figure in mass media and popular culture. He confesses that he got into the TV drama business for the purpose of having more coverage to boost his book sales, which he in fact achieved in 1992. Once in the business, however, he found that even though the elite cultural discourse dismissed his work as pulp, it was very difficult for him to tailor his own artistic pursuits to the whims of the masses. After taking part in an industry that recycles ideas and reproduces products to feed the demand for popular culture, Wang Shuo came to identify himself as an intellectual writer more overtly. His decision to return to writing was only a matter of time.

Wang Shuo is a cultural rebel no less fierce than any fifth-generation director, even though not many cultural celebrities recognize him as such. In his earlier years of writing, he configured a series of good-for-nothings, or hooligans, who mock every established moral and role model for ordinary Chinese. He never writes about heroes, even though his characters are sometimes capable of heroic deeds. The most attractive element in his writing is the vivid colloquial language, which exaggerates life's trivial matters in a humorous way, and counters official or traditional teachings. After his works had been gathered into the film/TV industry, his ordinary characters, who speak with humor, criticize themselves and flatter others in a sincere but funny manner, initiated a trend in urban culture.

When he came back in 2000, he re-configured himself as a courageous critic and openly criticized the most recognized or well known writers including the master of modern Chinese literature Lu Xun and the swordsman fiction writer Jin Yong. Compared to Zhang Yimou, whose films mostly subvert from underneath due to various pressures that a filmmaker has to deal with, Wang Shuo takes full advantage of his identity as a writer and a celebrity by attacking many traditional beliefs and evaluations directly. He has caused numerous unfavorable responses, including nearly a hundred articles selected into Liu Zhifeng's *Punk Hero: Re-criticizing Wang Shuo* (2000). In 2000, he renewed his "anti-hero" status through new media such as the Internet.

Even though Wang Shuo is only eight years younger than Zhang Yimou, the two have very different personalities and different views on life and art. Fifth-generation directors including Huang Jianxin, Zhou Xiaowen, Xia Gang, and Mi Jianshan, have all adapted Wang Shuo fictions, but Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige have simply refrained.[36] Their co-existence as heroes, however,

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[36] Wang Bin writes in more than one chapter of *A Biographical Sketch of Zhang Yimou* about the director's plan to adapt Wang Shuo's *I Am Your Dad*, but he finally gave it up. Zhang Yimou sees clearly

says much about the kind of heroes the Chinese need: they have to be business heroes as well as cultural heroes, and, in order to be both, they have to stay controversial in one way or another.

2.2 Triangular Relationships and Tripartite Negotiations

After money worship followed on the heels of economic reform and the slogan that "to be rich is glorious," nostalgia for a more modest past and the realization of self-adjustment became the favorite themes of film and TV drama during the late 1980s. For quite a few years, the financial status of the intellectual stratum, especially those who worked in teaching and research positions, was diminished, and the literati were disappointed to find that the authority they had just regained after the Cultural Revolution was again challenged. The rapid rise of mass media was welcomed since it provided a new ground for everyone to express his/her opinions. After a brief hesitation before entering into the arena of mass media, the literati have gradually recognized their power to manipulate public opinion. In the 1990s, it became a common practice for newspapers or TV stations to invite writers, filmmakers, and critic-scholars (usually professors or researchers in academic institutions) to participate in interviews and open discussions. It was a way for those who lived on modest salaries to obtain bursaries while gaining publicity that would help to sell their books. Moreover, the involvement of cultural authorities and celebrities, who often reveal insider stories, certainly helped to enhance the appeal, if not always the taste, of mass-media reportage.

Until the end of the 1980s, most newspapers and magazines still made efforts to differentiate themselves from tabloids, but today it is necessary for reporters to write about an artist's likes and dislikes in order to give their articles a personal touch that would indicate a certain authenticity.[37] Various movements and trends that once served the Chinese as a series of cultural feasts were turned into all kinds of "cultural fast food" as the commodity culture deepened in the 1990s (Huang Huilin and Yin Hong 2); thus, intellectuals had to find new ways to play their old roles. Chinese literati used to include hired scribblers who helped to operate the state apparatus of propaganda by educating the masses while reinforcing the "correct" ideology. Those who were not hired scribblers were intellectuals who either criticized or echoed official truths. After mass

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that the charm of Wang Shuo's writings lies in the latter's humorous language; but as a director, Zhang Yimou wants the visuals to speak more.

[37] Mr. Wei Guoshu, the former editor in chief of *Dianying Huakan* (*Film Stills*) told me in 1998 that they had to run a large number of stories on stars in order to survive. Although personally he would like to devote more space in the studies of new filmmakers and their works, as an editor-in-chief, his first priority was the survival of his enterprise.

media came into the picture, these intellectuals entered into discussions on a less ideology-laden ground and readjusted their stances according to their attitude towards mass media and popular culture.

More precisely, these intellectuals are further divided into at least **three groups**: those who happily recognize popular culture idols, those who deny products of the commodity culture, and those who attempt to balance between the two other perspectives. A typical example of the first group is Wang Yichuan, Professor of Chinese at the prestigious Beijing Normal University, whose earlier works revealed an attitude that was pro elite culture and enlightenment movement. He created a furor when he excluded Mao Dun, a formerly recognized literary master, while ranking Jin Yong, a Hong Kong-based swordsman fiction writer, fourth in the *Fiction Volume* of the *Twentieth Century Chinese Literary Master Series* (Hainan Press, 1994). Jin Yong was appropriately flattered and millions of fans were overjoyed, but scholars from the elite cultural stratum accuse Wang Yichuan of surrendering to vulgar literature.[38]

Those who still cannot appreciate the commercial turn of the Fifth Generation and other former elite stratum members are now regarded as intellectuals in a traditional sense, and their voices are rarely broadcast beyond academic circumstances and publications. Many members of this group are scholars of orthodox literature who have never been satisfied with the "shallowness" of film and other forms of popular culture.

A third group includes critic-scholars who attempt to maintain most of their literati values but express opinions in a more balanced way and an accessible language. This group, for instance, includes Yin Hong, Li Erwei, and Luo Xueying. Yin Hong is a professor and famous film scholar, who hosted a TV program promoting new films, and whose writings are academic but not theory laden. Interviews/articles by Li Erwei and Luo Xueying are also welcomed for their accessibility.

Although voices of the various groups can be heard through both official and mass media, it is generally agreed that, by the 1990s, "the ideological surface of Chinese cultural discussions forms a new context for a dialogue among three parties: mainstream cultural discourse, marginal intellectual discourse, and popular cultural discourse" (Wang Desheng, "Cultural Analysis" 32). The Fifth Generation has been greatly welcomed by some critics while being summarily rejected by others, precisely because it challenges all three discourses. The Fifth Generation filmmakers regard

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[38] The series includes eight volumes of poetry, fiction, prose and drama, with each volume edited by a prestigious scholar who ranked selected authors in a numbered sequence that corresponds to their achievement. Wang Yichuan was the editor for the fiction volume and selected works by Lu Xun, Shen Congwen, Ba Jin, Jin Yong, Lao She, Yu Dafu, Zhang Ailing, Wang Meng, and Jia Pingwa.

themselves as artists, but in Chinese cultural circles, such artists are *first of all* considered intellectuals. As artists, their task is to create a new cinema for China; as intellectuals, their goal is to reflect upon such cultural issues as nation and history through film works. They established themselves first through a repertoire belonging to the marginal intellectual discourse, but the pressure from the market and government has urged them to make both mainstream and popular cultural products from the late 1980s onward. That put an end to the Fifth Generation as a pure art film movement.

In many ways, fifth generation films intrigue and lead Chinese critic-scholars into the study of popular discourse. Even though mass media interfere in traditional dialogues between artists and critics all the time, clearly defined tripartite negotiations did not occur until *Red Sorghum* won a Golden Bear at the Berlinale. Shortly after celebrating this worldwide victory, domestic critics realized that a third party, the festival judges, had come into play. A number of them observed bitterly that "Westerners use the method of awarding prizes to surpass the judgment of Chinese critics. Our criticism is suddenly powerless and has lost its direction" (Zhang Yiwu and Meng Fanhua 3). A good example is the case of Wu Ziniu's *Evening Bell* (1989). During an official event held for Chinese distributors, not even one copy of the film was sold. Some said that *Evening Bell* tolled the bell for the Fifth Generation (Zhang Xuan 77). Then the chairman of Berlinale came to China and selected the film from several dozens of films presented to him. Soon after, *Evening Bell* was awarded a Silver Bear at the 1989 Berlinale, and many copies were sold, *even* in China (209). Domestic critics felt they were slapped in the face with such cases.

In order to discover why fifth-generation films have continuously won the hearts of Western judges since 1988, China-based scholars have studied the award-winning films by Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige closely. They have found that Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum*, *Ju Dou*, *Raise the Red Lantern*, and *Shanghai Triad* as well as Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth*, *Life on a String*, and *Temptress Moon* all involve a triangle relationship consisting of an old man, a young man and a young woman. As previously mentioned, while the old man stands for all settled beliefs, rules, morals and traditions, the young man tends to reject the father's teaching, or even attempts to replace his authority. The young woman is implicitly or explicitly in conspiracy with the young man, since she also has the urge to seek liberation and free herself from the oppressive old man, the father, and/or the entire patriarchal society.

In all the Zhang Yimou films mentioned above, the old man is always in a dominant position, while the young woman is his wife/mistress and the young man's object of love or desire.

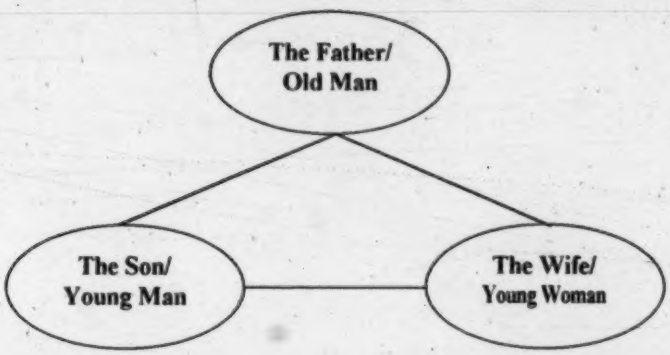

Figure 1: Triangular Relationships in Fifth-Generation Films

As Figure 1 indicates, the young woman is forced into her ill-fated position but has no intention to accept her fate. In *Red Sorghum*, *Ju Dou*, and *Shanghai Triad* the woman seeks her own liberation by encouraging or taking part in the young man's scheme against the old man. In *Raise the Red Lantern*, *Life on a String*, and *Temptress Moon* the young man has to choose between the old man and the young woman. The choice is difficult and has a symbolic meaning: he may choose to remain a filial son by obeying the father or master's rules, or to make his own dream come true by uniting with the woman.

Other fifth-generation films have offered variations on the above character patterns and Oedipus themes, but the triangle is always visible and strong. For instance, in Huang Jianxin's *The Wooden Man's Bride*, there is a strong mother figure. Instead of maintaining a "psychological alliance" with "the hero's bride" as the mother often does in Western myths (Frye 179), the mother in the film here simply stands in for the absent father and becomes the authority of the patriarchal order. In Zhou Xiaowen's *The Emperor's Shadow*, the triangular relationship is among the daughter, the father (or the man he chooses for her), and the father's childhood friend. In He Ping's *Red Firecracker, Green Firecracker*, the daughter Chunzhi, with no siblings, is placed in the position of the young master by the clan, and then of the master after her father's death; furthermore, she is dressed and respected like a man. When she falls for a man who is "unsuitable" to marry her, the clan chooses a "suitable" man to compete with her beloved in a firework contest. The man of the clan's choice wins the duel but not her heart: the triangle remains till the end film.

The conflict between the son/young man and the father/old man for the same woman reminds us of the character patterns in Western tragedy and comedy as discussed by Northrop Frye

in his famous essay, "Theory of Myths." The "four poles of characterization" in Western romance and comedy discussed by Frye (181) never appear in fifth-generation films, since most films only have one woman and thus all triangular relationships are formed around her. In Liu Miaomiao's *Family Scandal*, the old master, the young master, and a servant who becomes the adopted son of the old master, all desire one woman. In *Ju Dou*, a fourth character, Tianbai is important, but not really as the fourth pole of the characterization on top of the Oedipus triangle among Ju Dou, Tianqing (the young man/nephew), and Jinshan (the old man/uncle). Instead, Tianbai forms two new triangular relationships: one with his mother Ju Dou and his biological father Tianqin, the other with Ju Dou and his nominal father or her legal husband Jinshan. In the end, Tianbai destroys all triangles by killing both his biological and nominal fathers. In *Raise the Red Lantern*, although there are four women, none of them may form an alliance since their own survival depends on winning the master's favor.

Moreover, instead of just being a decoration of the hero's victory or a heroine who rebels in the disguise of a man, as in many Western myths and Chinese tales, fifth-generation films often reveal a strong-willed young woman as the actual rebel. *Yellow Earth*, *Temptress Moon*, *Raise the Red Lanterns*, and *Red Firecrackers, Green Firecrackers* are all such examples. Cui Qiao of *Yellow Earth* is the one who escapes from the marriage arranged by her father, while the Eight-Route soldier Gu Qing is only an indirect encourager. Ruyi of *Temptress Moon* dares to rule over men of her family and turns away from Zhongliang, a young man who dares not to show his love for her from fear of his gang master. Songlian, the fourth mistress of *Lantern* is brave enough to speak her mind to the son of the master although he avoids conflict by leaving the house. Princess Yueyang of *The Emperor's Shadow*, who fails after a series of battles to marry her own love, kills herself in order to protest against her father.

What interests scholars most in the fifth-generation films mentioned above is that such triangular relationships somehow correspond to those tripartite negotiations in China's cultural circles, as depicted by Wang Yichuan (*Zhang Yimou* 90-95) and other scholars, as we can see from Figure 2.[39] The old man in the previous triangle remains the symbolic Traditional Father and the young man is the Contemporary Self, but the woman's position is now replaced by a "Western Other." The position of the contemporary self in Figure 2, is similar to that of the young man in the first chart. The Contemporary Self, just like fifth-generation artists, faces two choices. On one hand, he may rebel against the traditional father by subverting everything the father imposes, or, by

[39] A comparable discussion can be found in Wang Yuejin, "The Cinematic Other and the Cultural Self?"

revealing the father's dark secrets, which would mostly likely be recognized by Western authorities who tend to see the Communists' censorship as a tyrannical stereotype. On the other hand, if the contemporary self wants to resist Western hegemony and the postcolonial trap, s/he has no choice but to seek strength from the Traditional Father since an artist cannot stand without a cultural identity. In the case of fifth-generation filmmakers, the seduction of the Western Other parallels the seduction of the young woman: irresistible but dangerous—the naming of Zhang Yimou as a postcolonial prisoner is only one example.

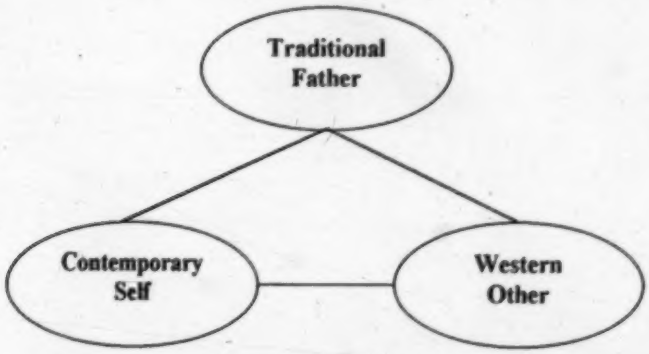

Figure 2: Tripartite Negotiations in Chinese Cultural Circles

From another perspective, it may be seen that, in all the seven films here, the Contemporary Self actually splits into both characters of the young man and the woman, who carry out the rebellion in alliance. The character that the Western Other tends to identify with most, however, is the woman, whose image and sexuality become part of the exotic landscape, and her body "the living ethnographic museum" showcasing the oriental culture (Chow, *Primitive Passion* 47). Having played many beautiful, rebellious, and suffering female characters in fifth-generation films, Gong Li, is not only a star who rose into international popularity, but also an incarnation of the beautiful, exotic, and feminine "Eastern Other," or, "China," to Western audiences. In any case, the discrepancy between the two triangles (in Figure 1 and 2) proves that, culturally speaking, the woman does not really have an independent place in any type of tripartite negotiation, since most of the time she is either replaced by, or recruited into, another party. In rare cases when she is bold enough to make her voice heard, the tripartite negotiation would shift back into a dialogue between the two genders, which I will explore in Chapter 5.

Except for the gender issues, the tripartite mode is very useful in understanding the fifth-generation phenomenon within the context of contemporary film culture. In fact, on the platform of mass media tripartite negotiations are taking place on various levels of cultural discourse, as shown in the following diagram.

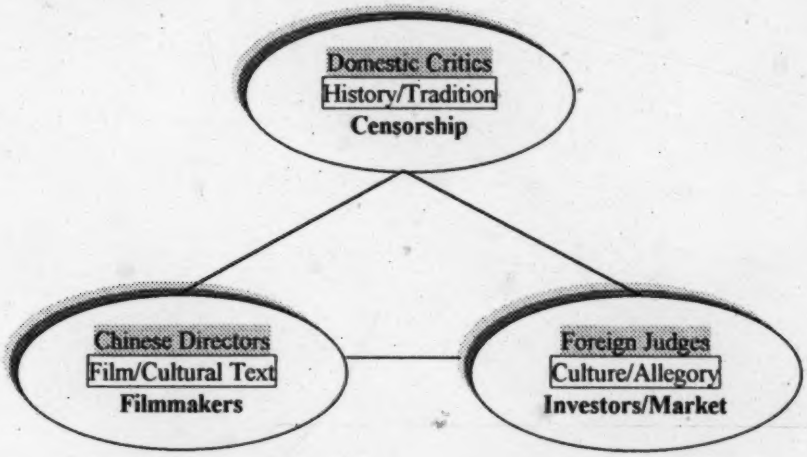

Figure 3: Tripartite Negotiations on Various Cultural Levels

Words in shadows reveal the picture of contemporary film culture in which domestic critics, foreign judges, and filmmakers are the three parties in negotiation. Meanwhile, opinions from each party may divide concerning fifth-generation and other films' translation of Chinese culture and tradition. While Western-based scholars tend to read "history" as "tradition," "culture" as "allegory," and "film" as a kind of "cultural text" (as indicated by words in boxes), China-based scholars may reject such interpretations by concentrating on the negotiations among filmmakers, investors, and censorship (as indicated by bold characters).

There certainly are more negotiations than what I have indicated in the diagram, but at this point, I want to affirm that cultural discussions around fifth-generation films are neither a black and white matter, nor mere exchanges between two interlocutors, but rather always a series of negotiations among *three* parties. I find the triangular framework very helpful in exposing how China's most controversial filmmakers have been rebelling against their own cultural tradition while seeking roots in it. For demonstrating their strategies, however, I will make use of this framework and go into further details in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 Visual and Other Shocks: Transforming the Literary Tradition

The media discussions of the Fifth Generation's role in contemporary Chinese culture have brought up many significant issues that have been then reconsidered during the development of film theory and criticism in the past two decades. Most scholars have now agreed that the achievement of the Fifth Generation is making *film* an independent art form that represents China as a nation in the world side by side with contemporary literature (Zhang Zhenhua and Zeng Guowei 1). Once a sub-genre of both literature and drama, film was not qualified to participate in tripartite negotiations with the two long-established forms until the root-searching movement and the push from a "Western wind" made its "surfacing" possible.

The close tie between literature and film is not a uniquely Chinese matter because feature films may always be divided into those with original or adapted screenplays, as shown by the categories of the Academy Awards.[1] Chinese critic-scholars made the matter "Chinese" by imposing the literary tradition on both film aesthetics and ideology, as well as on both cinematic creation and criticism. This tradition, which has prevailed throughout the history of many art forms, is a historical and concurrent factor that we cannot ignore. Even after the once rather monolithic intellectual stratum started falling apart in the late 1980s, "literature-oriented" theories and criticism remain some of the major forces in studies of Chinese film culture. Through a brief review of film's affinity with literature in the vicissitudes of Chinese film history, I hope to explain why rebelling against the literary tradition was necessary for the Fifth Generation, or anyone aiming at a real breakthrough.

1. Chinese Cinema before the Fifth Generation: A Long Way to *Film*

When film first came to China, it was called *xiyangjing*, meaning "Western mirror" or "shadow magic," a name suggesting that the Chinese perceived it merely as a trick show. Very soon, film was referred to as *yingxi* or *yingju* (shadowplay) in areas near Shanghai, as *dianying* (electric shadow) in regions near Beijing and Tianjin, and as *huodong yinghua* (moving shadow picture) in the Canton province (Zhou Jianyun and Wang Xuchang 13). In Western lexicons, terms for *film* either literally mean "moving images," "motion pictures," "live photographs," "cinema(tography)," "film" in the plastic sense, or "flick" (as in "flicker") in reference to the

[1] Edwin S. Porter's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1903) is an example of how early the adaptation started in American film. One of the two earliest short features in Chinese film history, *Zhuangzi Testing His Wife* (1913), was adapted from an episode of a traditional opera (Hong Shi et al. 26).

"persistence of vision."[2] Since film is truly an international invention involving inventors from France, England, Germany, and United States, some related vocabularies are shared among the French, English and German (Thompson and Bordwell 7).

Rather than using the translated term of "moving shadow picture" that was once popular in Canton, the Chinese preferred an already existing word *yingxi* (shadowplay) in reference to the new invention, before *dianying* became the most popular term.[3] While Western terms that emerged from the process of film invention all point to the essence of the medium in one way or another, both *yingxi* and *dianying* do not include characters meaning motion, image, photo, cinema, or film, but instead emphasize on the element of *ying* (shadow). In a way, the earliest part of Chinese film history was characterized by a brief transition from shadow magic to shadowplay.

1.1 Foreign *Shadow Magic* into Chinese Shadowplay

Most film history books in Western languages start from the invention of film or even preconditions of such an invention (4), but Chinese film history starts from the dissemination of this medium from the West. There are few sources on how film came to China, but director Ann Hu weaves limited historical fragments into her first feature titled *Shadow Magic* (2000).[4] It tells the story of a photographer from Fengtai Photo Studio in Beijing, Liu Jinglun, who was amazed by film shows operated by Raymond Wallace, a British nickelodeon peddler who came to China to make quick money. The life model of Liu was Fengtai's best photographer, Liu Zhonglun, while Wallace could be a Lumière operator or an Edison representative as recorded in both Western and Chinese sources (Thompson and Bordwell 15; Li Suyuan and Hu Jubin 3). The two soon developed a partnership: Liu persuaded people into the showroom, and Wallace taught him a few things about film and projection in return.

Liu was a young man fascinated by various Western technologies. In Ann Hu's film, his interests annoy the elders who rejected anything Western, which was a nationalist reaction after a series of defeats in battles and negotiations with Western countries at the turn of the twentieth

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[2] The flicker that characterized early cinema was due to the fact that projectors were hand-cranked and therefore could not run at a constant speed. When slowing down, the uneven projection rate and the gaps between the frames became noticeable. For a full explanation on the "persistence of vision" theory, see the relevant chapter in Michael Chanan's book *The Dream That Kicks*.

[3] The Chinese's choice was interesting, since the Japanese used *katsudo shashin* or moving photos before using *eiga* or reflected pictures. As other scholars, I use "shadowplay" as one word here in order to differentiate from "shadow play" as a kind of children's game, and "shadow theatre" in Chinese and other traditions.

[4] Ann Hu is in the same generation with Fifth Generation members, except that she studied filmmaking at New York University in the late 1980s.

century. Overwhelmed by such an invention, Liu studies, and succeeds in figuring out, the mechanics of film through observing a fan with four vertical pedals and a Chinese "running horse lantern," a lantern with a band of decorative figures that revolve as the hot air ascends. While the mechanics of the fan are similar to that of a Phenakistoscope, the running horse lantern is like an inside-out Zoetrope (Thompson and Bordwell 4-5). It is interesting for today's audience to see how Liu shares his discoveries with people in his neighborhood, whose reactions in the showroom while watching the earliest pieces by the Lumière brothers were not too different from that of spectators in Paris a couple of years earlier. Ann Hu also lets the actors act out audiences' behaviors as described in the two earliest film reviews in Chinese, which were published in 1897 and 1898 (Zhong Dafeng, "Yingxi" 38).

The most fascinating and engaging plot of *Shadow Magic*, however, is the competition between Western film shows and traditional Beijing opera in attracting audiences. Obviously, early silent films could not possibly compete with the sophisticated opera in terms of artistry, but they did amaze Chinese audiences with their degree of reality while striking people like Liu as a good way to "record our days for our children to see." The dramatic conflict between China and the West in the film, which is also one between the traditional and the modern, comes to a climax moment when Beijing opera fans throw Wallace, dressed in a Chinese robe, and Liu, in a British suit, out of the theatre house. The partial reconciliation comes when Tan Xinpei, a superstar of Beijing opera and a customer of Fengtai, pleads for Liu's life when the projector is on fire during a screening at Empress Dowager Cixi's birthday party. Wallace is deported, but his friendship with Liu survives.

Later on, with a camera sent by Wallace, we see Liu shooting Tan's opera episode, *Conquering Jun Mountain*. Ann Hu's film closes with a sequence in which Liu is showing neighborhood people a film about themselves. Apparently, he simply set up a camera in the street, and out of curiosity people came to see what it is. When two cross talkers see themselves on the screen, they stand up and start to talk as if dubbing voices for their silent screen images. This scene about talented audiences reminds us of an earlier scene about a talented projectionist—Liu Jinlun—who plays a Strauss waltz on a phonograph to one of the short films showing a female dancer. Although the real-life Liu never shot such a film, it does say much about how early Chinese people began to dream of making film a national art form.[5]

In Chinese film history, *Conquering Jun Mountain* (1905, or *Dingjun Shan*) is regarded as the first film made by the Chinese. The fact that the first Chinese film is a screened version of

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[5] For an interesting account of film's dissemination into, and, earlier forms in, China, see Zhang Zhen, "Teahouse, Shadowplay, Bricolage: 'Laborer's Love' and the Question of Early Chinese Cinema."

Beijing opera is often cited as evidence of "the close link between theatre and film in China" from the very beginning of Chinese film history (Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei 128). Scholars observe that while the Lumière brothers and Méliès explored various ways of filming the worlds of reality and fantasy, the Chinese readily focused their camera on the opera stage, making film a recording medium of another art (Ma Junxiang 8). Although it might be coincidental that *Dingjun Shan* was the first Chinese made film, many scholars regard it as a natural, if not inevitable, result of the long celebration of Beijing opera and the immediate recognition of film as a tool to document the most valuable art performances:

> When tracing back early receptions of film, the Chinese seemed to be different from Westerners and rather indifferent towards matters of scientific invention and technology advancement. This was not because they lacked a scientific mind or looked down upon technology, but due to the fact that Chinese film history started from the dissemination of film instead of the invention of it. When people tried to figure out the essence of film but could not access necessary information from the West, they looked at what was there and soon found the tie between film and theatre. From there, they established the understanding of film. (Li Suyuan, "On Early Chinese Film" 26)

The particular type of theatre the Chinese found closest to film is shadowplay, which first appeared in the Han Dynasty (around 200 BC) and had already become a sophisticated art in the tenth century (Chen Yutong 54). It employs puppets carved from dried sheep, ox or donkey skin, which are flat, colored, and half-transparent, with patterns resembling traditional paper cuts, and which are very beautiful when seen in light. A shadowplay theatre can be set up anywhere, with a white screen placed between the audience and performers, so the audience can only see shadows of the puppets but not the crew behind the screen. As is vividly revealed in Zhang Yimou's *To Live* (1994), the puppeteer or a musician sings and recites lines behind the screen, as if dubbing voices for the puppets, The affinity between shadowplay and cinema, however, is not exclusively Chinese. From Ingmar Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander* to Wim Wenders' *Kings of the Road* and Jane Campion's *The Piano*, magic lantern shows, shadow theatre, ghost show, and phantasmagoria are often regarded as a kind of "cinema before cinema"—also the title of a British Film Institute video on the pre-history of cinema.

Nevertheless, in Chinese film history, *shadowplay* did not remain a form of pre-cinema, but became the core concept of early film aesthetics (Chen Xihe, "Shadowplay" 192). The involvement of artists from "new drama" (*xinxi*) or "civilized play" (*wenmingxi*)—the localized Western spoken drama imported via Japan (Ma Junxiang 19)—was critical in establishing the

shadowplay theory, which is now considered the most coherent early film theory of China.[6] As Zhong Dafeng and others point out,

> Since 1907 a number of new drama troupes were formed, and they flourished under the stimulation of the 1911 revolution. Plays that represented anti-Qing revolutionaries and their struggles were widely influential. [...] But when the revolution toppled the Qing rule, people's social and cultural interests changed drastically, and there was less urgent need for the new drama as a channel for venting political enthusiasm. The civilized play lost its audience and quickly declined; many major troupes disintegrated. The civilized play now faced a serious predicament and had to search for a new way out. Interestingly, it was the emergent cinema that provided the civilized play with a new arena. (47-8)

Civilized dramatists played an important role in shaping the fundamentals of early Chinese cinema, emphasizing "strong effects of plots, dramatic conflicts, and visual stimulants" that the audiences of old theatre were ready to adapt (52).[7]

Critic-filmmakers, including Hou Yao, Zhou Jianyun and Sun Shiyi, promoted the shadowplay theory in 1920s, interpreting "shadow" as "the image on the screen," which modifies "play," or "a story system organized in accordance with dramatic principles" (Chen Xihe, "Shadowplay" 193-4). In practice, these filmmakers often used relatively static cameras shooting mainly from medium- or long-distance in long takes, while revealing sophisticated mise-en-scènes and excellent stage performances (Li Suyuan, "On Early Chinese Film" 25). Along with the theatrical mode, leftist artists also brought the social-realistic concerns from civilized plays into films dated from late 1930s to 1940s, which became part of "the international leftist filmmaking" around the time (Thompson and Bordwell 350). Up to this point, Chinese cinema was not isolated from world cinema, but communication was one-way: foreign movies were introduced or imported into China but not the other way around (Ma Junxiang 19). In October 1995, when audiences saw over a dozen Chinese silent films at a silent film festival in Pordenone, Italy, they were surprised at what the Chinese had already achieved in the 1930s (Li Suyuan and Hu Jubin 2). Similar responses can be found in many studies of early Chinese cinema by Western scholars.

The Soviet influence became very strong in the 1950s when Russian instructors came to teach at BFA and Chinese students were sent to Moscow for training programs. The socialist "edutainment" (*yù jiào yú lè*) tradition became solidly established in cinematic creations, especially in genres such as revolutionary/war films. From 1953 on, political movements

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[6] Both new drama and civilized play were names used to refer to both translated Western plays such as Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Chinese spoken dramas. "Civilized" was an adjective used to describe many things imported from the West.

[7] Also see Du Wenwei's "*Xi* and *Yingxi*: The Interaction between Traditional Theatre and Chinese Cinema."

continued, intensified, and finally led to the maniac Cultural Revolution. In such a political climate, Chinese film regrettably developed into a very rigid, didactic mode that tended to erase multiple interpretations. As a result, during the Cultural Revolution, almost nothing was permitted except for the Eight Model Plays (or *ba da yangbanxi*), which have "ultra-didactic" revolutionary plots, "schematic narrative lines, [and] naïvely 'typed' protagonists and antagonists" (Rayns, "Chinese Vocabulary" 9).

1.2 Divorce with Theatre and Departure from Literature

As the Chinese say, things turn into their opposite when they reach the extreme. Chinese cinema also came to its turning point in 1979 when artists and critics started an enthusiastic debate on new directions for Chinese cinema. While Zhong Dianfei suggested that film should be divorced from drama, Bai Jinsheng announced that it is high time for Chinese film to throw away the walking stick of drama, because up to this point, *drama* had been placed in the center of film aesthetics, as shown in Figure 4. The size of the oval labeled "Literature" indicates that it had a longer history and more dominant position than "Drama" (smaller oval) and "Film" (smallest oval). While the "Literary Tradition" and "Shadowplay Theory" had been established long ago, "Film" has yet to have its own coherent theory.

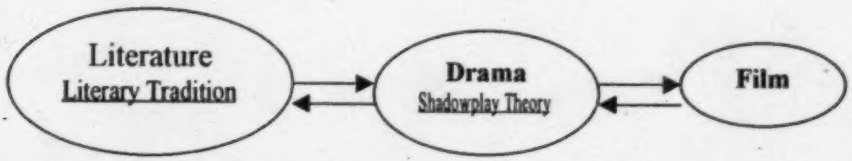

Figure 4 Theoretical and Critical Studies of Film before the Fifth Generation

Many critics who rejected dramatized film, however, went "backwards" to discussing film's literariness (indicated by the lower left arrow) instead of moving forward to explore film's film-ness (indicated by the upper right arrow). They quote Gu Kenfu's "Introduction to *Shadowplay Magazine*," written in the mid-1920s, which already claimed that "the essence of *yingxi* includes three elements: technology, literature and science"—with "literature" enclosing everything non-plastic or non-technical (Gu Kenfu 15).

By the early 1980s, when film had been part of the Chinese people's life for nearly eight decades, film was still considered by many as an inferior seventh art, one that comes after

literature, painting, music, dance, sculpture, architecture and drama; that is, "literature rendered by cinematic means."[8] While other arts have been regarded as independent, drama and film are often considered as two sub-genres of literature, as indicated by the Chinese terms "theatrical literature" and "film literature" (Zhang Junxiang, "Essay" 25-6). Numerous writings from both Mainland China and Taiwan, especially those dated from the 1960s to 1980s, evaluate films according to their literariness (*wenxuexing*). On the cover of Taiwan author Shu Tan's *Film and Literature* (1992), for instance, we also read that "a good literary work does not have to possess a film sense, but a good film must have the sense and charm of literature." Scholars have offered various definitions for "literariness," but they all share the premise that film aesthetics and ideologies should follow the principles of Chinese literature and other arts,[9] which mostly have been discussed in, and passed down through, writings by the literati. Technically speaking, literariness roughly suggests the ideological content, characterization, narrative, and theatrical or lyrical expressions presented in a film (Zhang Junxiang, "Essay" 32).

Until fairly recently, Chinese scholars have overemphasized the role of the "literary script," originally a Russian term *Литературная пьеса* (Zheng Xuelai, "Theoretical" 183). Institutionally speaking, every major film studio had a Literature Division. Beijing Film Academy has a Department of Film Literature, while other universities also offer Film Literature courses (186). Instead of giving students a chance to become familiar with film as a unique medium, these courses introduce cinematic techniques for the purpose of cinematizing literature.[10] When literary scripts cannot be made into films, it is believed that they still have value as literary pieces (Weng Shirong 68).[11]

When most scholars and fourth-generation filmmakers were looking at Drama and Literature (as shown in Figure 4), the Fifth Generation and a small group of scholars were focusing on "Film" (smallest oval), especially through post-1950s works by European art-house *auteurs*. At an Italian Retrospective Show in Beijing, Zhang Yimou fell in love with films such as Antonioni's *Red Desert* (Xiao Hua 185):

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[8] "Literature Rendered by Film Means" is the title of Zhang Junxiang's 1979 essay, translated as "Essay Done in Film Terms" in Semsel's *Chinese Film Theory*. The original article is titled "Yong Dianying Biaoxian Shouduan Wancheng de Wenxue" (or "Literature Rendered by Cinematic Means"), published in *Selected Essays on the Literariness of Film* (1-23). The essay has been supported by many but criticized by scholars like Zhang Wei and Zheng Xuelai ("Film Literature and Film Characteristics").

[9] In Chinese terminology, "arts" (as in "Faculty of Arts") is called *wenyi* (or literature and arts), a notion indicating that literature is not a just kind of art but as important as all arts put together.

[10] Weng Shirong's *The Techniques in Film Literature* is such a textbook on how to write a "literary script."

[11] Statistics show that in the year of 1987, 124 literary scripts for film were published in six journals including *Cinematic Creation*, *New Film Works*, and *Film Literature* (Wang Taorui 52).

> Touched by the artistic achievement of world film, Fifth-generation directors had an urge to pursue a *real* kind of film. In the specific context of Chinese cinema then, this meant that they had to make a choice between film and literature. They naturally avoid restrictions of *literariness*, and diminish it to the lowest extent. When *One and Eight* and *Yellow Earth* came out with a splash, people began to talk about the directors' pursuits instead of the stories. (He Shaojun and Pan Kaixiong 4)

The "strong visual shocks" that these films brought along marked a late but decisive departure from both drama and literature (Zheng Guo'en 3-8). These works inspired some scholars who attempted to establish a *yingxiang* or shadow-image theory that sees *ying* (photography) as the basis of the film. Although such theories were accused of "putting the cart before the horse" (Chen Yutong 57-8) and soon forgotten, it is an example of how fifth-generation works stimulate an ontological debate over "what film is"—the question once posed by Bazin.

This debate continued for a decade and indicated a significant change. Before the 1980s, theoretical studies of film had been undervalued, since "many Chinese philosophers looked upon speculative theory as harmful and useless, which characterizes the model of Chinese thought as a pragmatic-rational spirit" (Chen Xihe, "Shadowplay" 200). Once it was agreed that a Chinese theory was necessary, both the root-searching and enlightenment schools started to bring in sources from two different directions.

Scholars looked back to earlier theories and films and made important discoveries. First, they found that early cinema was diversified in terms of theme, style, and genre. Between schools of entertainment and education, there is the school of edutainment that attempts to educate through entertainment. Besides filmmakers who stressed theatrical principles, there was an intellectual director, Fei Mu, who suggested that film should have departed from drama as early as 1934 (Chen Mo, *Flying* 44). The rediscovery of his representative work, *Spring of a Small Town* (1948), is more startling: the film contains most significant motifs that we have credited to Kurosawa Akira, Chen Kaige, and Hou Hsiao-hsien. And there were artists like Shi Dongshan, Dan Duyu and a few others, who explored techniques for achieving cinematic beauty and spectacles half a century ago in the same spirit of the Fifth Generation. The works of these forerunners were criticized as aestheticism and thus underestimated (Li Suyuan, "On Early Chinese Film" 32-33). The Fifth Generation members had to face similar criticism when they started filmmaking. Now that they have become trendsetters in Chinese and world cinema, other filmmakers are trying to keep up with their standards of exquisite visuals.

Another source that scholars have examined is Western film theories developed after the 1950s under the "enlightenment" spirit. Those who read foreign languages began to introduce film works, movements, and trends from the early 1980s, while resuming the translation of

foreign theories after a long interruption. In fact, as early as 1928, Hong Shen had already translated Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov's declaration on film's future, which was only half a year after the declaration's publication. Although the article was an eloquent exposition on montage theory, it did not attract much attention because the influence of the shadowplay theory was very strong at the time. Later translations of Soviet and American film theories helped Chinese filmmakers improve their skills, but foreign ideas did not shake the foundation of the literary tradition (Zhong Dafeng et al. 41-42). It was only in the 1980s, when the Chinese opened up to the world and were ready to welcome Western ideas, that Western film theory really came into play, as suggested by Figure 5.

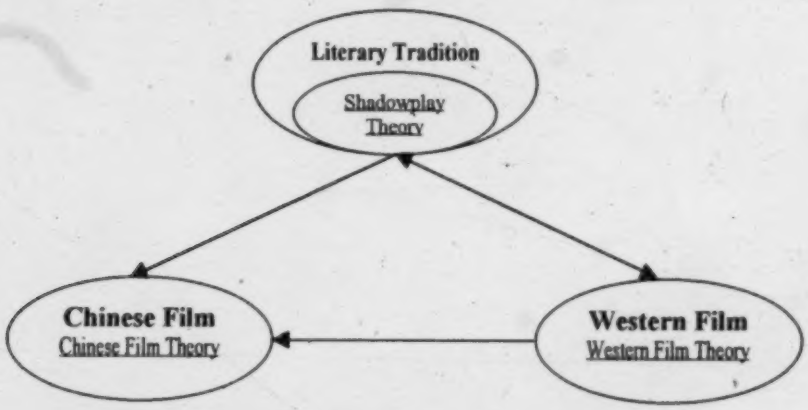

Figure 5 Formation of Contemporary Chinese Film Theory

The discourse of Chinese "Literary Tradition" that is largely responsible for the existence of "Shadowplay Theory," and the discourse of "Western Film," that comprises sophisticated theories, became two reference systems for contemporary Chinese Film, which is still searching for a theoretical framework. The tension between the two systems here is similar to that between Traditional Father and Western Other (Figure 2), while Chinese Film, just like the Contemporary Self, faces a choice between, and a reconciliation with, Chinese and Western discourses. In this context, fifth-generation works have been welcomed by scholars from both traditions because they present Chinese reality with a more cosmopolitan language than literature and provide intriguing texts for various cultural studies.

We cannot neglect the fact that it was early fifth-generation films that first attracted the attention of the West before critical debates and theoretical analyses in China during the 1980s were translated into English and published in G.S. Semsel's *Chinese Film Theory* (1990). Luo

Yijun, a prominent Chinese critic who was invited to write the "Introduction" for the book, celebrated the fact that Western scholars were starting to pay attention to Chinese theoretical studies (Semsel, *Chinese Film Theory* 2).[12] In a meaningful attempt, Semsel concludes the book with Chen Xihe's study of the shadowplay as a conscious confrontation with Griffith, Eisenstein, Bazin, and others in answering "what film is" (190). Chen recognizes "shadowplay aesthetics as an ontology" closely "integrating with the theory of film" (200) in his article, which is a good example of resisting the pattern of "Western Theory/Chinese Text" in cultural studies from the mid-1980s onward by Western-based scholars.[13]

It is not easy to develop a systematic theory from the non-systematic and discursive writings on Chinese Film, but the tripartite negotiation, indicated by Figure 5, certainly brings new hope. The Chinese used to believe that theory should guide practice in one way or the other, yet when facing such a constantly changing discourse as fifth-generation film, practice is altering theory in many ways. The discussions from this point on will examine a number of such examples.

2. The Fifth Generation: Visual and Other Shocks

For China-based critic-scholars, *One and Eight* caused the first "earthquake": some applauded its bold artistic exploration, while others were disturbed by its unbalanced and monographic visual compositions (Zheng Guo'en 3).[14] Since *One and Eight* was not released openly, the first fifth-generation work that critics elsewhere saw was *Yellow Earth*. As Tony Rayns remarks, critics elsewhere were tempted "to put an exact date to the birth of the 'New Chinese Cinema'" on April 12, 1985:

> That was the evening when *Yellow Earth* played to a packed house in the Hong Kong Film Festival in the presence of its two main creators, director Chen Kaige and cinematographer Zhang Yimou. The screening was received with something like collective rapture, and the post-film discussion stretched long past its time limit. [...] One of the biggest rounds of applause was for the young man who took the audience microphone and stammered out not a question but a declaration of love to the two film-makers: "I gave up hope in China years ago," he said, "but if a film like yours can be made in China, then there's hope for all of us." (Rayns, "Chinese Vocabulary" 1)

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[12] There certainly are scholars who do not appreciate Semsel, because Semsel seems to agree that the increase of film quality somehow equates the decrease of literariness (Gao Jian 34).
[13] For related discussions, see Esther Yau's "*Yellow Earth*: Western Analysis and a Non-Western Text" and Wimal Dissanayake's "Epilogue: Asian Cultural Texts and Western Theory."
[14] See also Ge De, "The Rise of Chinese Cinematography in the New Era."

This is not a casual comment of any sort: it makes us wonder what kind of film deserves it. Obviously, neither Ke Lan's original prose nor Zhang Ziliang's original script were praised as such. The credits appropriately went to the excellent directing and the more superb camerawork. A decade later, *Yellow Earth* is still a favorite of many, including Zhang Yimou, who confessed: "We wanted to make a film different from those we grew up with and mostly hated. We got very emotionally involved and did months of research into place and period. It was a time and a landscape no one had explored before. Even today I love the film very much" (Andrews). While the literary originals for both *Yellow Earth* and *One and Eight* (a prose piece by Ke Lan and a long poem by Guo Xiaochuan) pretty much belong to the mainstream cultural discourse, the films turned out to be any thing but mainstream.

These two films came out when some fourth-generation directors were experimenting with lyrical or prose films, which were considered a conscious departure from the theatrical influence (Chen Mo, *Zhang Yimou* 21).[15] While some critics discussed the two debut works of the Fifth Generation along this line, others affirm that the Fifth Generation was one step ahead from the start. Instead of "modernizing the film language," as the Fourth Generation attempted to do, the younger generation *began with* a modern film language, which reveals influences from European avant-garde works after 1950s (He Shaojun and Pan Kaixiong 3). Such an affirmation was supported by a series of works that followed, including Wu Ziniu's *Secret Decree* (1984) and *The Dove Tree* (1985), Tian Zhuangzhuang's *On the Hunting Ground* (1985) and *Horse Thief* (1986), Chen Kaige's *The Big Parade* (1985), and Huang Jianxin's *Black Cannon Incident* (1985). As Liu Xufeng suggests,

> The static composition used in [these] films give the impression of a slowed down time and a still space, which is a kind of expression that is against the general principles of "motion" in motion pictures. The delay in time, however, comes as a strong visual stimulation and psychological shock, pressing people to re-examine their environment after the initial feelings of depression. (15)

Foreign receptions of fifth-generation works mainly came after the victory of *Red Sorghum* in 1988, that is, after the Fifth Generation's art-film movement ended. The directors continued their explorations of visual imagery and their works stunned audiences everywhere with their vibrant colors and picturesque sets. For instance, Stuart Klawans described his impression of *Raise the Red Lantern* in an article, claiming that "no other filmmaker had that

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[15] Chinese scholars discussed the way drama changed after the 1950s and reached the extreme form of model play during the Cultural Revolution; after that point, film, painting, and other art forms all attempted to "divorce from drama" (Chen Pingyuan and Huang Ziping 68).

actress and those reds. Nobody else was using quite the same editing rhythm to such meticulous effect, or bringing such meaning to bear on each physical detail" (16). In a festival report, Harlan Kennedy depicted the same film as "a dazzling dynastic melodrama" that "set the jaw permanently ajar," with "each snow-robed roofscape, each lantern-studded interior observes an aesthetic protocol as merciless as the behavioral protocol imposed by the Master" ("Affectionate Beast" 44).[16] During my research, I found that for scholars outside China too, shocks from the visuals of fifth-generation films came before studies of the ideological issues behind their aesthetic strategies.

Rey Chow argues against scholars who dismiss Zhang Yimou films as lacking depth beneath the dazzling surface (*Primitive Passion* 151), but she is not able to explain why there are such comments. We have to bear in mind that under the domination of the literary tradition, the form exists to serve the content rather than to speak for itself. Thus, before the emergence of the Fifth Generation, Chinese critic-scholars had hardly been encouraged to look much below the surface or deal with such visual dynamics. Since the visuals were meant to enhance the characterization and "set off the leitmotiv" of the film, they were not supposed to speak for themselves. This overemphasis on theme or meaning of film prevented Chinese film from developing its visual character.

Once the surface is too compelling to be overlooked or underestimated, the problem is not about visuality, but the interpretation of it. Even though a number of professional film critics and scholars in China and overseas recognized the excellent *film* qualities of fifth-generation works from the beginning, their studies with reference to world cinema could not convince a larger number of Chinese critic-scholars who came from the more prominent field of literary criticism. Besides, fifth-generation films in most cases do include titles of literary originals in their credits, so critics habitually go back to the literary texts in search of clues.

2.1 Unfaithful Translations: From Literature to Film

In 1996, Hunan Wenyi Press published *The Fifth-Generation Directors Series*, comprising five volumes, each focusing on one director: Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Huang Jianxin, Wu Ziniu, and Zhou Xiaowen. The major part of each book named after a director is a collection of the literary originals adapted by him, in addition to a couple of articles on or by him.

[16] In a dialogue between Robert and Charlotte of Godard's *Une femme mariee*, we hear that while Charlotte finds American films "prettier," Robert thinks that they are "less arousing" than Italian movies (Mulvey 54). From numerous reviews, we can see that Zhang Yimou's films impressed Western audiences as both pretty and arousing. I will come back to this point in the next chapter.

Although these five directors have been dealing with very different subjects and thus employing very different literary works, the publication of the series seems to suggest that now these works can be read as a new kind of discourse: fifth-generation literature. The series may put film and literature on an equal footing in the minds of its editors, but it does not settle debates on issues in adaptation that had been going on for a decade before its publication.

From my earlier discussions on the dominant literary tradition, it is not difficult to understand why Chinese filmmakers have adapted so many literary works. Each generation, however, has its own principles or ways of adaptation. For instance, the Third Generation, which stands for standards and norms that the Fifth Generation worked against, mostly concentrated on modern literary masters such as Lu Xun, Ba Jin, Lao She, and others. The *authenticity* of such canonized writers predetermines that adapting their works into films is like "dancing in fetters and handcuffs," but many still believe that it is "a worthy risk" (Ding Lin 75). Reports of third-generation directors often include explanations about the efforts they made to preserve the flavor while conveying the spirit of the original. "To respect the original," as Xie Tieli claimed, "is my principle of adaptation" (Di Zhai 14). The result of this attitude toward adaptation is a body of screen "translations" of literary masterpieces, which are so "faithful" that they hardly have any life of their own. It is not surprising that most of these films are considered inferior compared to the original: between the languages of film and literature, too many elements are simply untranslatable (Zheng Xuelai, "Theoretical" 195).

A second method of adaptation, which is probably the most frequently used one in world cinema, is to blend imagined details into the original story (Su Shuyang 70). The Fourth Generation and a few third-generation members explored this method in the New Era after 1979 and produced some successful examples including Wu Tianming's *Old Well*. If we see the fourth-generation move as a step to free film from literature, then the Fifth Generation's treatment of a literary work as raw material instead of a blue print, which is the most liberated way of adaptation (69), is another step forward. While the Third Generation's rigid adherence to literature received much criticism, the Fifth Generation has also been accused of unfaithfully translating literature, and hence unfaithfully translating of Chinese culture.

When examining fifth-generation adaptations of literature, scholars find five asepcts that are different from previous adaptations. The first aspect is in the choice of literature. Most films by Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Huang Jianxin, and Zhou Xiaowen are based on novels or novellas, with authors mostly born in the 1950s and 1960s and who were considered to be avant-garde, neo-realistic, neo-historic, etc. Many of these literary works keep a deliberate distance from politics and maintain the ideological ambiguity by telling stories about marginal figures

living in geographically and culturally marginal areas. The copyright for a work was usually sold to a director immediately after its publication or even before its completion, which means that the director's choice is not based on the authenticity of either the author or the work.

Red Sorghum, *Ju Dou*, and *Raise the Red Lantern*, for instance, formed a series of Zhang Yimou classics that have been studied by many Chinese and overseas scholars. Respectively, the three films were adapted from works by Mo Yan, Liu Heng, and Su Tong, whose "experimental fictions" have "a contempt for politics" that itself is "highly political, since it aims to subvert the slavery of literature to communism imposed by the Communist party" (Lu Tonglin, *Misogyny* 15). The "extreme form of Western individualism, highlighted by violence, perversion, and death, exemplifies the ideological vacuum in post-Mao China" in these fictions (13-14), chimed in easily with the Fifth Generation's rebellion consciousness. Moreover, these writers' humanistic concerns and sensual depictions also make their works good material for a director like Zhang Yimou (Zhou Baozhen 114).

The **second** unique aspect of fifth-generation adaptations is that they translate words rather "completely" into landscapes, images and colors. In films such as *One and Eight*, *Yellow Earth*, *Swordsman of Double Flag Town*, *Evening Bell*, and *Life on a String*, visual shocks mainly come from the landscapes and the presentations of them. Traditional cinematic landscapes, under the influence of classical Chinese paintings, usually included mountains and waters in a natural scenery or bridge(s) over river(s) in a cityscape, both abundant in greenery. The above films, however, reveal deserts and barren lands of western China with landscapes that are harsh to the eyes. Even films shot in cities, including *The Big Parade* (1985), *Black Cannon Incident* (1985) and *No Regrets about Youth* (1991), achieve a similar effect by focusing on bleached locations like a military camp, a large factory, and a construction field, with greenery missing.[17] Zhang Yimou affirms that the avoidance of green is deliberate (Rayns, "Chinese Vocabulary" 14).[18]

Besides abandoning green as a neutral background color, fifth-generation directors often limit the range of colors in order to give each film a unique outlook. *One and Eight* presents actors dressed in "dark or ochre-colored clothes" in the monochromatic setting of Ningxia province to obtain "the look of woodcuts: bold, decentered compositions, and real sense of chiaroscuro" (9). *Yellow Earth* casts landscapes in "yellow, black, white, red—yellow for earth, black for clothes, white for purity, red for hope" (Zhang Yimou, "Yellow Earth" 68). *Swordsman*

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[17] Qian Yunxuan, the art designer for *No Regrets about Youth*, says that the juxtaposition of traditional and modern architectures in the film—with a spectacular cluster of skyscrapers in the background and an old Beijing-styled house in the middle of ruins in the foreground—is a conscious effort to compose a cityscape unseen in previous films (6).

[18] This echoes Japanese New Waver Oshima Nagisa's detestation of the ambiguous and neutral green of the

of Double Flag Town foregrounds a bright yellow desert that is bleached by the sunlight of high noon, while *Life on a String* tones down the yellow by lowering the horizon and revealing more blue of the sky. *Black Cannon Incident* impresses us with internal scenes in black and white, which are set in contrast to stills of sunset and sunrise in orange. Even a more recent film like *Shadow of the Empire* (1995) continues this fifth-generation tradition by dressing its characters and designing its props in beige, brown, and black in order to create a sense of the ancient empire opposing the colorfulness of the modern world.

The **third** remarkable aspect of fifth-generation adaptations is the simplification of plot and characterization. In fifth-generation films, especially the earlier ones, the rather complex stories of literary originals are usually reduced to basic lines. Replacing the internal thoughts and psychological descriptions are vibrant rituals that characters must perform, be it everyday work or special events. Monologues and dialogues are "reduced to the barest minimum, and the evolving relationships are articulated more through reaction shots of faces than through words" (Rayns, "Chinese Vocabulary" 30). And, in the case of *Yellow Earth* and *Swordsman of Double Flag Town*, the expressionless faces of many characters, saying everything and nothing, do not really help much in "determining" their true thoughts.

An Gangqiang points out that Zhang Yimou's characters actually fall into a kind of color pattern: red women, gray men, black old men, and colorful children (39-42): characters are not only individuals but also symbols in a visually engaging symbolic world. If we recall the triangle (Figure 1) that reveals the relationship among characters of many fifth-generation films, we can see that though each character stands at a certain pole of the social structure, the battles and conspiracies among them keep challenging the moral issues. The beautiful and sensual scenes in the films again blur the violent realities in original texts and make the ideological reflections even more ambiguous.

The **fourth** aspect concerns the space in which film characters carry out their daily activities. Let us consider Zhang Yimou films as examples. Since northern China is what he and his crew is most familiar with, the majority of their films are set there.[19] Before shooting a film, his crew usually chooses an open but picturesque location and builds an interior setting. While the landscape of the location often fills the punctuation shots, the rather empty surroundings gives the main setting a sense of closure and isolation. And the main setting itself, mostly invented by fifth-generation art-designers such as Cao Jiuping, always lends the film a distinct look.

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pine tree that is always in the background of traditional Japanese theatres (Turim 21).

[19] Even though original stories such as *Raise the Red Lantern* and *Story of Qiu Ju* take place in southern regions, Zhang Yimou moves them north and changes the dialect and details of customs accordingly (Zhou Baozheng 117).

The Yang's Dye-house in *Ju Dou*, for instance, has a square dyeing pool that is always filled with red liquid. Both sequences of patricide take place in this pool. Beside the pool and in the middle of the courtyard, there is a set of high gallows for hanging dyed cloth, which is again in a limited range of colors: red, orange, and yellow. The looks exchanged between the male and female protagonists would not be as beautiful without such hanging fabrics. And when their love is ended by the man's death, the woman sets the gallows and cloths on fire. In Liu Heng's original novel *Fuxi Fuxi* (*Obsession*), however, no dye-house is mentioned.

The Chen family compound in *Raise the Red Lantern* is a real location that Zhang Yimou's crew found. The architecture has a "fearful symmetry" (to borrow a poem title by William Blake): from the main courtyard leading to the central gate, we can see four separate units, two on each side. Each unit is like a miniature of the compound, with a smaller gate, two wings on both sides of the courtyard, and a main room at the inner end that is divided into the bedroom and living room areas. Stuart Klawans describes it as a "maze of doorways framing doorways and courtyards leading inwards to other courts, of patterned tiles, of obsessive symmetries" (16). In Su Tong's novella, there is only one minor reference to a lantern: "On the seventh day of the twelfth lunar month, lanterns were hung up all around the Chen compounds. Chen Zuoqian celebrated his fiftieth birthday that day" (*Raise the Red Lantern* 53). In the film, however, "the whole look of the movie was built up around the visual hook of the 'hot' light of red paper lanterns" (Chute, "Golden Hours" 65), hanging under the gray brick roof.

In accordance with Zhang Yimou's theory that film is a one-time art, such isolated settings designed with limited ranges of colors in his films effectively enable audiences to be drawn into the unique cinematic worlds. At the opening of his films, the audiences are usually able to follow the protagonists into the main setting: Jiu'er of *Red Sorghum*, Tianqing of *Ju Dou*, Songlian of *Raise the Red Lantern*, and Shuisheng of *Shanghai Triad*. Through the eyes of these characters, audiences immediately get a visual clue about the location of the main setting and its environment. Then, after moving into the main setting, the camera starts to explore the space from various angles as the story develops: while distance shots from a high angle form the basic rhythm of the narrative, close-ups and shots with voyeuristic intentions help viewers become familiar or intimate with the characters. *Ju Dou*, for instance, "is full of angle shots of grimacing, grunting, gasping people and clanking old machinery" (Klawans 16).

The above efforts made by fifth-generation filmmakers, together with their deliberate obscuring of the time period, which is usually specific in the literary originals, have resulted in the fifth distinct aspect of their translation. Namely, the rather isolated and enclosed settings, the symbolic characters, the simplified plot, and the repeated rituals all create a sense of timelessness

in the film versions. Therefore, although many fifth-generation films focus on the past, their creators are concerned less with history itself than the human conditions that have changed little with the passage of time. Huang Jianxin's *The Wooden Man's Bride*, Chen Kaige's *Life on a String*, Liu Miaomiao's *Family Scandal*, and He Ping's *Red Firecrackers, Green Firecrackers* have no indication of the stories' time at all. Zhang Yimou avoided the wars and movements of the 1940s and 1950s by moving *Ju Dou* to the relatively peaceful countryside of the 1920s. He divided *Raise the Red Lantern* into chapters: "Summer," "Autumn," "Winter," and "Next Summer," skipping the "Next Spring." *Shanghai Triad* is subtitled "The First Day," "The Second Day," and so on. *To Live*, which spans over thirty years of revolutions and political movements, can still be regarded as a timeless tale because it is not really a tale about politics but, rather, one about survival under "the unbearable weight of being" (Li Luxiang 106).[20]

Compared to their literary originals, all of which vary greatly in terms of plot, characterization, narrative style and language, fifth-generation adaptations seem to bear more resemblance among themselves. In addition to their trademark of dazzling visuals, a common theme of these films is the liberation of the Self, which often starts from a desire for the Other—usually a beautiful woman who is an object of both love and lust. In cases like *Temptress Moon* and *Firecracker*, the object of love is a handsome young man from the outside, who stands for the freedom that the heroine has been longing for. Liberation of the Self in these films cannot be achieved, since layers of patriarchal power forbid his/her desire for love/marriage. Thus the "primitive passion" of the Self can find no exit but through an illicit affair, which would lead to severe punishments (usually by the clan) that are both physical and psychological. Fairly often, the result is the death of some and unresolved guilt of others. These stories may be considered as "family/clan allegories," but instead of manifesting clear moral positions as old fables do, fifth-generation works constantly challenge the moral, the rational, and the cultural with the presence of the carnal, the sensual, and the primitive. In short, the "adapted film" by a fifth-generation filmmaker always bears the mark of its *auteur*. Even a seemingly faithful adaptation like Li Shaohong's *Blush* (1995), as I will argue in Chapter 4, significantly alters elements such as attitudes towards gender and history.

Zhang Yimou may say that the use of red in *Raise the Red Lantern* is symbolic, while the red in *The Story of Qiu Ju* is "an aspect of reality" in the northern peasant's life (Sklar, "Becoming" 29), but the choice of colors, like that of landscapes, are never innocent. In fact, both the choices of colors and landscapes and the way they are combined, are intended to de-

[20] Apparently, Li Luxiang has Milan Kundera's 1988 novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* in mind when he puns on this expression. Kundera became very popular in 1990's China, replacing García-Márquez,

familiarize. For the same reasons, recordings of natural sounds, such as the whistling of the wind on the loess plateau, are recorded in the sound track of *Yellow Earth*. The post-production staff in Germany almost mistook the unfamiliar sound for a technical defect. The unique way in which different types of sounds and music, including choruses, folks songs, traditional operas, are combined, also create an atmosphere or an intertextuality that gives voice to the unspeakable and the silenced while challenging the already spoken or written text.

Similar to the effect of the limited range of colors, the music in many films, especially those composed by Zhao Jiping, the fifth-generation flagship composer, is rather melodically simple and easy to remember. When played on various instruments in different rhythms through the films, these tunes create different effects as they interact with the voices of people and the sounds of nature. In *Shanghai Triad*, for instance, sharp contrasts between the metropolis and the countryside are reflected by a very expressive sound track that faithfully acts as "the ears" of Shuisheng, a country boy who listens, watches, and puts together a story that he cannot fully understand. Without the sound tracks corresponding to the visuals, the alienation effect of many fifth-generation works could not be achieved to the same extent. While visuals may still rely on the graphic descriptions of the original literature, the sound tracks are mainly the creation of the filmmaker.

In addition to the estranged visuals and sound tracks themselves, the vague connection between the film form and content is also intriguing. The juxtaposition of barren landscape with the presence of crowds, for example, appears in many films: *Yellow Earth*, *Life on a String*, *To Live*, *Blue Kite*, and so forth. Visually, we sense the tension and rhythm created by such paralleled scenes, but do they have deeper meanings? Cannes audiences, who insulted *King of the Children* with the "Golden Alarm Award," would most likely give a negative answer, while Chinese readers of Ah Cheng's original would not have the same problem concerning the work's meaning. Some fifth-generation filmmakers may explain that the uncertainty between image and meaning are not really "deliberate" but rather "the true representation of real experience, an experience that we cannot explain clearly, and [which] cannot be verbalized" (Sklar, "People" 38). If this is true, then the connection between these directors' art and life comes before the link between the film and its literary original.[21]

These findings, however, cannot lead to any definite conclusion except that the Fifth Generation's way of translating literature is very "unfaithful"—apparently, the films keep only the story lines and basically stand as independent texts. Why, then, are scholars always stressing

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who was one of the favorites in the 1980s.

[21] For a comparable study in Taiwan cinema, see Stephanie Hoare's "Innovation through Adaptation: The

the contribution of literature to the Fifth Generation's success? I think the main reason lies in the belief that literature is the "primary" narration of China as a nation, while film is at best a "secondary language," a viewpoint or prejudice shared by other nations as well. In Homi Bhabha's edited book *Nation and Narration* (1990), Timothy Brennan writes about "The National Longing for Form" and observes:

> It was the *novel* that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the 'one, yet many' of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles. [...] Its manner of presentation allowed people to imagine the special community that was the nation. (49)

Chinese intellectuals expressed similar views on the role of novel in a nation. The "Introduction" to *Xin Xiaoshuo* (*New Novel*),[22] a literary journal founded by Liang Qichao—one of the foremost enlightenment pioneers of China—in 1902 in Yokohama, Japan, states the following:

> If we want to enlighten people of a nation, we have to improve the nation's *xiaoshuo* [novel(la)] first. If we want to update the concepts of morality, religion, politics, custom, and learning, we must innovate *xiaoshuo*. Even when we need to renew ideas and identities, we must renew *xiaoshuo*. Why? Because *xiaoshuo* has an incredible power in manipulating people. (Jia Zhifang and Wang Tongkun 3)

Inspired by his readings of European novels and studies on reader response, Liang developed an opinion that was very advanced for his time (2), when *xiaoshuo* was the only literary genre using vernacular Chinese language accessible to a large readership (6). Lu Xun, the father of modern Chinese literature, expressed similar views about using *xiaoshuo* for the enlightening of the masses after the May Fourth Movement of 1919 (7).

Now, *xiaoshuo* occupies a significant place in the Chinese literary canon, because it is the only genre capable of encompassing other literary genres, and hence the best form to record true (hi)stories of Chinese hearts and represent the national/cultural spirit of China.[23] Once a low, but popular, art, *xiaoshuo* has more qualities of popular culture than other literary genres. This is partly why, when aiming at art-house films, fifth-generation directors chose poetry and prose—two literary genres that do not restrict film as the novel does due to their usually weak narrative structure. When hoping for a larger audience, however, they naturally went back to *xiaoshuo* for

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Use of Literature in New Taiwan Film and Its Consequences."

[22] The word for "novel" here is *xiaoshuo* in Chinese, which actually includes novels, novellas and short stories. Lu Tonglin offers a good introduction to origins and implications of the term (*Misogyny* 5).

[23] Among modern literary masters of China, Lu Xun is probably the only writer who did not produce any novel in his life, though he had an impressive repertoire of novellas and short stories. He also expressed similar views about using *xiaoshuo* for the enlightenment movement of May Fourth that started from 1919

engaging stories. Audiences walked out of the theatre, wondering what movies like *Horse Thief* were trying to say, while critics went back to see such films a second time and still had difficulty writing about their thoughts. Zhang Yimou, the first fifth-generation director who gave the story back to the audience, did not want this to happen to his works: after all, films are made to attract audiences and not to alienate them.

Now scholars of fifth-generation films go back to 1984, the year when *Yellow Earth* caused a sensation, even though the "real-time" worldwide glory for the Fifth Generation actually started in 1988. In that year, as some scholars put it, *King of the Children*'s failure in Cannes symbolically ended the Generation's art movement, while *Red Sorghum*'s victory in Berlin marked the beginning of a new stage (Rao Shuoguang and Pei Yali 241). If the Fifth Generation's unfaithful translation of poetry and prose evoked a revolution in film language, its unfaithful translation of *xiaoshuo* has had a deeper impact in cultural reflections, since *xiaoshuo* is a more powerful carrier of fundamental ideas about literature, nation, history, and tradition.

2.2 Unsettled Negotiations: Transforming the Literary Tradition

Studies on the Fifth Generation's way of adaptation soon led to evaluations of the artistic group's international success. Opinions are again divided—only this time, the tripartite negotiations are among three positions or standpoints rather than three groups, which is a result of the increasing disintegration within the intellectual stratum (Cai Xiang 48). Figure 6 shows that in addition to the traditional binary opposition between the literature-oriented and film-oriented positions, there is a third position that is reception-oriented.

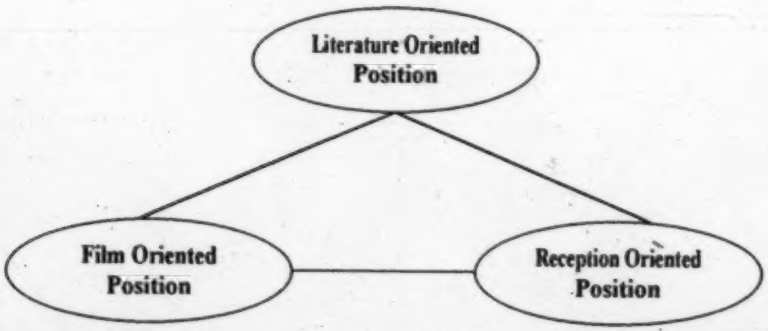

Figure 6 Tripartite Negotiation on the Fifth Generation's International Success

(Jia Zhifang and Wang Tongkun 7).

The three positions here correspond to those in Figure 5, with each serving as a point of departure for a body of discursive theories and discussions.

Scholars departing from the literature-oriented position attempted to fit fifth-generation films into various literary trends during the past two decades. They readily examined trademark genres of the Fifth Generation including Chinese westerns, family allegory, and urban comedy in relation to the "western novel" or native writing, avant-garde or neo-historical novel, Wang Shuo or some other "urban-commons novel," and so forth. Even Chen Kaige and Wu Ziniu's philosophical questioning of life are analyzed alongside "root-searching" literature, which "stresses more on the search than the root" (Cai Xiang 49). Such studies usually underestimate the value of fifth-generation works, accusing them of losing the layers of meanings and cultural depth in the literary originals beneath their exquisitely composed visuals (Chen Mo, *Zhang Yimou* 43; H.C. Li 113).

Supporters of this literature-oriented position note that even Zhang Yimou, the Fifth Generation's leading director, admits that "film can never throw away the walking stick of literature" (Chen Mo, *Zhang Yimou* 31) and "his success is indebtted to good novellas." Many then proposed a theory "attributing Chinese films' international success to the wide involvement of writers in filmmaking" (Liu Heng and Wang Bin 45). In this vein, some critics worry that writers' involvement in film/TV productions would have a negative effect on their literary writing, while others believe that writers would add new blood to film/TV productions. The discrimination of film is also shown in a theory that the Sixth Generation's early failures in attracting audiences is due to the fact that its members mostly write their own original screenplays (Zhu Zixia 1).

While third-generation filmmakers tended to choose literature "worthy" of adaptation, the Fifth Generation's adaptations made literary originals by the avant-garde writers worth more in terms of book sales (1). The true fans of avant-garde literature may not be willing to give the directors much credit, but publishers are. For instance, in the "Translator's Note" that prefaced his translation of Su Tong's trilogy, Michael Duke writes:

> The novella "Raise the Red Lantern" was originally titled "Wives and Concubines," but in the Hong Kong and the second Taiwan editions of the trilogy it became, as here, the title story for the book *Raise the Red Lantern*. [...] The title was also used for Zhang Yimou's 1992 Oscar-nominated film. The red lanterns were the invention of Zhang or his scriptwriter and were just one of many changes introduced in the transformation of this complex narrative. The English reader can now savor the full flavor of Su Tong's original conception. (Su Tong, *Raise the Red Lantern* "Preface")

Duke did not make it clear that both the Hong Kong and Taiwan editions took the title from Zhang Yimou's film. If it was not for the film's Oscar nomination, why would these books adopt a title that is not suitable for a novella that barely mentions lanterns of any color.[24]

Both *Raise the Red Lantern* and *Red Sorghum* (by Mo Yan) from Penguin Books and *The Obsessed* (or *Ju Dou* by Liu Heng) from Panda Books are covered with stills of Gong Li from Zhang Yimou films, which says much about the publishers' hope to boost sales by the films' impact. Amy Tan, whose words are printed on the cover of *Red Sorghum*, claimed that "Mo Yan's voice will find its way into the heart of the American reader, just as Kundera and García Márquez have." We cannot tell whether this has happened, but we can already say that the films by Zhang Yimou and his peers have found their audiences everywhere in the world.

In spite of the controversies between literature and film, as I have mentioned more than once, it was China's dream for both to gain recognition from the world. Although film experts, China or Western-based, all pointed out more than a decade ago that the Fifth Generation's success was largely due to the more cosmopolitan quality of the film language, literature-oriented scholars could not justify the failure of Chinese literature—a higher art than film, to their mind. The prestigious international awards that have honored Chinese films since 1988 have been a constant reminder of the long but vain expectation for Chinese literature to be recognized worldwide.

Liu Zaifu, a famous writer, laments two chances the Chinese missed in his "A Hundred Years of the Nobel Prize for Literature and the Absence of Chinese Writers" (1999): Lu Xun refused the nomination, and Shen Congwen died while his works, translated by N.G.D. Malmqvist (Fellow, The Swedish Academy), were being considered for the award in 1988 (64-65). Regarding such bitter facts, Chinese literati, on the one hand, hold on to their pride by pointing out that the Nobel Committee unforgivably missed such great authors as Lev Tolstoy, James Joyce and Vladimir Nabokov. On the other hand, they still feel "unbalanced" since China's neighbors, including Indian poet Tagore and Japanese novelists Kawabata Yasunari and Oe Kentsuburo, all received the prize (62).[25]

Ironically, when Gao Xingjian, a Chinese immigrant with French citizenship, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2000, the literary circle in China was pretty indifferent; in contrast, Chinese officials protested the prize since Gao had incurred considerable trouble with his political

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[24] And why would Penguin Books care to make arrangement with William Morrow and Company (the original publisher of the English translation) to reprint it (as indicated by a note printed on the title page), if it was not the success of Zhang Yimou's film?

[25] Besides Liu Zaifu's article that was published in *Unitas*, a Taiwan literary journal, Hong Kong's *Ming Pao Monthly* (November 1999) also ran a special discussion panel containing articles on the absence of

views. This reminds us of the "trans-Pacific row when China tried to withdraw *Ju Dou* from the Best Foreign Film Oscar category" a decade earlier (Andrews), an event that was followed by a number of stories concerning Chinese films' entries into international film festivals and their foreign releases without the permission of China's Film Bureau.

Such battles between China and the West led the Chinese to reflect upon their own culture with respect to reception. Looking back over the past decade, one finds too many films by the fifth or younger generations advertised abroad as "banned in China," as if their "bad name" at home would somehow ensure its overseas success. Discussions of frequent conflicts between Chinese censorship and Western hegemony have opened up an enormous new field of study in Chinese cinema, about which I will elaborate in the next chapter.

The emergence of views from the reception-oriented position has greatly advanced film-oriented criticisms and theories, which were poorly developed under the restriction of the literary tradition. A number of Western film experts, joining their Chinese colleagues, discovered unique kinds of cinematic landscapes—rural or urban, natural or human—that function as "an inner connection" or "consistent mentality" holding together films under the banner of "fifth-generation" (Sklar, "Becoming" 28). Technically speaking, they noticed that these landscapes are composed through pervasive use of back-light, elevated angle, static shot, superimposed images, and limited color-range, for example. Ideologically speaking, fifth-generation directors may deal with very different subjects, but they all reject the conflict-resolution mode of both Hollywood and Soviet melodramas, while documenting personal stories rather than the traditional "people's memory" of a period of history (Yin Hong, "Contemporary" 25). Unlike the rather smooth and flowing narrative style and camera work of older filmmakers, their insistence on long takes and modest montages lend the visuals a "weight," or a sense of eternity, both of which force audiences to ponder and reject verbal interpretations.

Wang Bin, the author of *A Biographical Sketch of Zhang Yimou*, who is also one of Zhang Yimou's regular "literary advisers," describes in detail how they find a story, buy the copyright, produce a script, and discuss it with the entire crew throughout shooting. The process of brainstorming usually results in a huge distance from the original, and thus only the part that may fit into the scheme of filmmaking is well reserved. As Rey Chow points out: "precisely because translation is an activity that immediately problematizes the ontological hierarchy of languages—"which is primary and which is secondary?"—it is also the place where the oldest prejudices about origins and derivations come into play most forcefully" (*Primitive Passion* 184). Therefore, the prejudice that film is a secondary language gave rise to the accusations concerning

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Chinese writers from the twentieth century's Nobel list.

Zhang Yimou's "unfaithful translations," even though, as Wang Bin tells us, he is not translating at all. And when he reversed the "primary-secondary" relationship of literature-film by paying writers to come up with stories for his films in the form of novels—he paid Shanghai author Li Xiao to produce a novel for *Shanghai Triad* (Wang Bin 221), and six established authors to write stories on Empress Wu Zetian—he stunned the mass media. When six "historical novels" about the most powerful and controversial woman in Chinese history were produced around 1994, the mass media found the case too "Hollywood" to be true in China (Chen Mo, *Zhang Yimou* 37).

During a 1993 panel discussion on Zhang Yimou films, film-oriented critics once expressed doubts about whether it is still appropriate to regard the director as a member of the Fifth Generation. Some suggested that maybe he should be called the "4½th" generation, since his insistence on the issues of moral values resembles that of a fourth-generation director (Yue Yi 306). I believe that the real problem here has to do with his going back to literature. If *Red Sorghum* (1987) was the point when the Fifth Generation turned to novels for inspirations, *The Story of Qiu Ju* (1992) by Zhang Yimou marked its second departure from literature. *Qiu Ju* is almost a "documentary" with many non-professional actors and over half of the film shot by hidden cameras. Seven years later, the director filmed another documentary styled film, *Not One Less* (1999). This time, all actors were non-professionals playing themselves, with characters keeping the actors' real names. The story, again, has little to do with the novel mentioned in the credits, and is about a teenage girl who replaces a village teacher on leave and goes to the city to find a run-away student of hers. The film takes a rather realistic look at contemporary China and presents a quite positive image of the mass media, especially television, which helps the girl find her student and brings donations back to her impoverished school. The film's presentation of the television medium as the final solution after a series of failed attempts through other means is interesting, especially when compared to presentations of the Internet and other new media by filmmakers of younger generations. Jin Chen's *Love in the Internet Age* (1998) by BFA graduates of 1997, for instance, was the first of its kind.

When Zhang Yimou made *Red Sorghum*, he aimed at a "hybrid film" mixing music, folk customs, and elements from different film genres, but by the mid-1990s, he established his own norm, which is reflected by other filmmakers. Zhang Jianya, a Shanghai-based fifth-generation director, offered a new kind of comedy with *Three-Hair Joined the Army* (1992) and *Mr. Wang: Flames of Desire* (1993), two films based on famous cartoon series of the 1940s by Zhang Leping and Ye Qianyu. Having characters living in the 1940s speak and act like characters in the "revolutionary films" of the 1950s/1960s and imitate classic scenes of fifth-generation allegories,

the two films are indeed post-modern comedies ridiculing the most recent film tradition of China—the fifth-generation tradition.[26]

If the fifth-generation translation of literature radically de-centered the literary signs with non-literary signs of film language, recent developments of other non-literary media (i.e. television, the Internet, computer games, etc.) and films' reflections on them have further weakened the domination of both literature and the literary tradition. In the 1990s, even the long established literary genre *xiaoshuo* was in a dilemma: "On the one hand, it lies in a context where visual-symbolic empires and non-literary social forces are dismantling it; on the other hand, its own artistic pursuit is becoming increasingly ambiguous and losing its own boundaries" (Chen Xiaoming, "After the Avant-Garde" 35). Thus, although conflicts among various art forms cannot be settled, the merging of various art forms and genres will be the future trend.

3. Conspiracy or Corruption: "Surrender" of Elite Culture

In 1988, when we could not yet talk about a "Chen Kaige film" or a "Tian Zhuangzhuang film" with confidence, "Wang Shuo film" was suddenly "in," and the term was immediately accepted by audiences and critics (He Shaojun and Pan Kaixiong, "What Does Film Want" 4). Though some scholars pronounced the failure of the Wang Shuo film as early as 1989 (6), this "punk" writer continued to work in the film/television industry for another eight years and produced an impressive body of work. His becoming one of China's cultural heroes had much to do with his involvement in non-literary media such as film and television, which spreads faster and more widely than literature. The interesting point here is that when three fifth-generation directors chose his novels for adaptation in 1987, Wang Shuo was not recognized as a serious or good writer within literary circles and was despised by the elite cultural stratum as a "literary punk" (*wenpi*). Even though he had many fans among young readers, he was definitely not one of those intellectual or avant-garde writers whose artistic pursuits then were similar to that of the Fifth Generation. By 1987, fifth-generation directors were still considered intellectual artists and part of the elite cultural stratum, which made their choice of Wang Shuo novels particularly intriguing: "Was the literary circle ignorant, or was the film circle looking up to the wrong

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[26] *Mr. Wang*, for instance, ridicules its protagonist by having him perform the sorghum-field love sequence in *Red Sorghum*. While the half-naked, masculine sedan-carrier "Grandpa" arouses his beloved by stamping sorghums stems down into a "bed," the skinny bookie-looking Mr. Wang "turns off" the woman he desires by first taking too long to stamp those sorghums stems that keep bouncing back, and then having trouble unbuttoning his Chinese styled vest and robe.

person? Or, is it that literature and film do not share the same value system due to their differences in expressing life experiences?" (Shao Mujun, "Wang Shuo Film" 8-9).

If Wang Shuo's "anti-intellectual sentiment" soared after being continuously rejected by the elite stratum (10), then what exactly did those fifth-generation directors see in his writings? As I mentioned before, the four Wang Shuo films made in 1988 answered the call for "entertainment films," but it was only after a good laugh in the movie theatre that audiences started to see the real source of Wang Shuo novels' "entertaining quality." Wang Meng, a famous writer and former Minister of Culture in China, writes about Wang Shuo's works:

> His language is vivid and absolutely down to earth, [...] while his thoughts and feelings are very much of the urban commons. [...] He is completely on the same level as his readers, not only by avoiding any sublimation, but also by humbling himself in front of the reader. Reading his works is like smoking a cigarette or playing a round of mahjong; it is not for improving health or learning principles of life. His works are hardly touching, but somehow they satisfy some of your personal interests—you feel the pleasure of breaking the norms and being naughty, so you won't live like a fool or become too tired of living. (14)

As a recognized member of the elite intellectual stratum, Wang Meng received much criticism for recognizing the "spirit of commons" in Wang Shuo's works as something valuable. Compared to Wang Meng's article written in 1993, the Fifth Generation's appreciation of Wang Shuo was in advance of its time.

In fact, from the beginning, film's commercial values have been closely related to its popular essence as an entertainment medium. Although Chinese cinema is a very complex matrix, it has always revolved around three cores: education, entertainment, and edutainment (Tan Chunfa 262). The call for entertainment film by Chen Haosu (Vice Minister of Culture) in 1988 caused quite a heated debate, not because it was the first time, but because it was after thirty years of regarding film as mainly a means of education—unavoidable under the domination of the literary tradition. When Zhang Yimou made *Red Sorghum*, which was before Chen's clarion call, he provided the following justification:

> I am not against the rationale in a film, since a film with no thoughts cannot be called a real work of art. But film has to have its own power, so when shooting a film, we have to consider how to make it interesting to watch, rather than worrying too much about its philosophical implications and social concerns. [...] Film should be designed to be enjoyed for the first viewing; so is *Red Sorghum*. It does not intend to carry much philosophical thinking, but seeks to have emotional communications with ordinary people. (Luo Xueying, *Red Sorghum* 50-51)

Although Zhang did not use the word "entertainment" here, the last sentence well summarizes his understanding of film as a popular art form, which is echoed by Wang Meng's comments on the charm of Wang Shuo novels a few years later.

In 1988, beside the three directors who worked on Wang Shuo novels, the Fifth Generation offered a good repertoire of "entertainment films:" Zhou Xiaowen's *The Price of Frenzy*, Li Shaohong's *The Silver Snake Murder Case*, Tian Zhuangzhuang's *Rock Kids*, Wu Ziniu's *Joyous Heroes* and *Between the Living and the Dead*, and so forth. During the following decade, fifth-generation filmmakers again showed their strength in reconciling artistic pursuit and commodity culture, producing internationally acclaimed masterpieces including Chen Kaige's *Farewell, My Concubine* (1993), Tian Zhuangzhuang's *Blue Kite* (1993), and Zhang Yimou's *To Live* (1994), as well as box office hits such as Li Shaohong's *Blush* (1995), Zhou Xiaowen's *Emperor's Shadow* (1996), Zhang Yimou's *Keep Cool* (1997). During the same period, Wang Shuo's television dramas had enjoyed immense popularity in China, and his film/television career came to an end after playing the role of a gang's head in Jiang Wen's *In the Heat of the Sun* (1996). The film is based on Wang Shuo's novella "Ferocious Animal" and became a box office hit that has won high critical acclaims. By that time, both Zhang Yimou and Wang Shuo were media heroes and business heroes, which is the true meaning of cultural heroes.

Around the same time when Wang Meng praised Wang Shuo, Wang Yichuan, a professor of Chinese at Beijing Normal University, arrived on the mass media and popular culture scene with an editorial decision that caused much noise. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, when putting together the *Fiction Volume* of the *Twentieth Century Chinese Literary Masters Series* he excluded Mao Dun and ranked Jin Yong in fourth position.[27] If Wang Yichuan's denial of Mao Dun's entry into the *Series* was against the Communist canon, what did his inclusion of the swordsman fiction writer Jin Yong imply? To both Jin Yong and his fans, such a high ranking of Jin Yong was an unexpected surprise, since this was the first time for swordsman fiction—a long existing low art genre—to be canonized, especially by a member belonging to the elite cultural stratum. Wang Yichuan, however, was not alone: Professor Yan Jiayan of Beijing University offered a course titled "Studies on Jin Yong Novels." Further, the University of Colorado even

[27] As a founder of the famous "Literary Study Group" in the 1920s, Mao Dun's literary criticisms and novels revealed a pro left-wing attitude that inherits the May Fourth spirit while fiercely criticizing bourgeois ideas, feudalism, aestheticism, and the decadent school (Zhou Bin 46-48). His film criticism regarded Hollywood movies as "the means to seduce and anesthetize the mass" in the 1930s while highly praising Soviet films in the 1940s for helping people to understand that "the purpose of life should be serving others instead of satisfying one's own desires" (49). He took important positions in the Ministry of Culture and Writer's Association in the 1950s and has been regarded as one of the greatest modern writers.

held a conference on the "Jin Yong Novel and Twentieth Century Chinese Literature" (Jin Yong).[28]

Considering the above incidents, it was only natural for many to detect the signal of elite culture's "surrender" to popular culture in the late 1980s. Is the surrender a result of the conspiracies between literature and film, high and low art, or elite and mass cultures? Or, is it the corrupting influence of popular culture and mass media lowering the status of high art and elite culture? Again, it is hard to decide which is primary and which is secondary here. When literature as a high art began to give in to the tide of popular culture, the literary tradition in cinematic creation also began to collapse. As I will demonstrate through some case studies in the following two chapters, representations of nation and history—two of the biggest themes in the literary tradition—have been both challenged by the arrival of commodity culture in which all fifth-generation directors have had to "popularize" their art.

[28] Wang Shuo's "My Views on Jin Yong," an attack on Jin Yong novels as examples of bad writing, was a bigger surprise, since Wang Shuo seems to speak from an elite intellectual position although his language is still in the "punk" style (*Ignorant* 73-78).

Chapter 3 Narrating Nation and Nationalism

Ann Hu's *Shadow Magic* takes us back to the turn of the twentieth century when film was first disseminated to China. As the first Chinese-made film, *Conquering Jun Mountain* recorded the wonderful performances of Tan Xinpei but missed his singing, the most important element of Beijing Opera.[1] In the film, some people say, "Western stuff is unreliable"; so both Raymond and Liu Jinglun try to prove that they are wrong. At their most glorious moment, while showing films to Empress Dowager Cixi in the Forbidden Palace, unfortunately, the projector catches fire. The result is the deportation of the "foreign devil" with "evil intentions," and we hear the same people saying: "You see, Western men are as tricky as their crafts." As Zhong Dafeng, Zhang Zhen, and Zhang Yingjing explain,

> Because of continuous defeats in their confrontation with the superior Western warships and cannons over the decades, many Chinese felt both disdain and fear towards Western culture. When cinema first arrived in China, people were attracted by its novelty, yet accepted it with great caution. (46)

Even when watching films became good entertainment, as a certain Mr. Sanderson, who visited China at the time, has observed, the audiences then simply

> cannot sit through a picture show for an hour and a half without frequent cups of tea and cold towels. Accordingly, the picture is stopped about every reel for an interval to permit him to imbibe and to whiz his towel across to an attendant in the aisle, who immediately wet it in icy water and whizzes it back. (Leyda 25)

As Ann Hu's film vividly reveals, such habits of appreciation in watching opera were as stubborn as their conventional minds, which is, in many ways a "side-effect" of the long civilization that the Chinese have been extremely proud of.

Such pride is a major force in making the "seventy-five year development of film in China," as the late critic-writer Xia Yan claimed in 1980, "a process of nationalization" (Semsel, *Chinese Film Theory* 98). Besides the literary tradition, the nationalization (*minzuhua*) of film also preoccupied cinematic creation and criticism in China before the New Era. *Minzu* can be translated as "nation," "country," or "race" depending on the context, and *hua* is an affix meaning "-ization" or "the assimilating/absorbing of" something foreign, as suggested by veteran critic Luo Yijun (Rong Weijing 129). Just as each generation has its own view of the literary tradition, every group of directors has contributed to film nationalization by searching for their own

[1] Among the four elements of Beijing opera, singing comes before speaking, acting and fighting. People say "listen to the opera" rather than "watch the opera."

"national form" (*minzu xingshi*) and/or ways to represent the national spirit (*minzu jingshen*). This chapter will examine how the Fifth Generation and their contemporary directors deconstruct and reconstruct the conventional views on national form, national spirit, cultural tradition, and so on.

Before the emergence of the Fifth Generation, very few overseas scholars (with Chinese ethnicity or not) paid attention to Chinese cinema, and "film nationalization" was a significant issue only for scholars residing in China. Paralleling the discussions on film's literariness, topics regarding film nationalization caused many enthusiastic debates among China-based scholars during the 1980s, before new concerns about the intriguing conflicts between China and the West shifted critical attention in the 1990s. Now, the problem of a national film is studied in the critical context of Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and Third World theories both outside and inside China. And again, there are three parties in the picture.

The first party is China-based critic-scholars who used to be the intermediaries between filmmakers and audiences, having dialogues with filmmakers while dominating film criticism and theoretical studies in China. These scholars neither studied Chinese cinema as a monolithic reality, nor considered themselves as members of one group: before the Cultural Revolution, many got into trouble for expressing "different opinions"; but from 1979 onward, they have been continuously differing among themselves. This diversity in their opinions has to do with each scholar's personal experience and interest, as well as his or her knowledge and understanding of Western theory and Chinese scholarship. When Western-based scholars in China studies accused them as a group of "sino-centrism" (Berry, "Race" 47) or "sinochauvisim" (Chow, "Introduction: On Chineseness" 6), because of their "hostility towards Western theory" (2), many of them then reacted as a group. Their rejection of the Western hegemony is not radically different from that of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, or Homi Bhabha, although they cannot express sophisticated views as eloquently as do these theorists.

Then there are scholars with Chinese ethnicity, but living outside China proper (or the mainland), who have "always been bewildered by China" (Ang, 224), and especially by the rise of New Chinese Cinema. In a way, their bewilderment with the Fifth Generation was first initiated by the landscapes of the loess plateau, the Yellow River, etc., which bring up nostalgic feelings towards the motherland, especially after they discovered that it is never possible for them to "say no to Chineseness."[2] Scholars with great ambitions have attempted to construct a critical space called "cultural China," which "both encompasses and transcends the ethnic, territorial, linguistic, and religious boundaries that normally define Chineseness" (Tu Wei-ming v), or an

off-center "periphery" that "will significantly shape the intellectual discourse" on China in the future (34). Once feeling caught between China and the West, and finding it impossible to fully identify with any side, these scholars are turning a doubly marginalized position into a point of departure for new discoveries. Although new dilemmas have never stopped coming up in the quest, in the sphere of "writing diaspora" (the title of a book by Rey Chow) Western-based Chinese scholars have gone beyond the territories of Orientalism, Feminism and various Post-theories.

The third party is Western scholars, mostly "traveling white theorists"—as E. Ann Kaplan calls them—who made their way to China. With some extraordinary experiences of a different "empire of signs" (Roland Barthe) and a daily reality, they have also been very keen on offering authoritative observations. Their writings have already caused a great impact, as can be seen in how widely Julia Kristeva's and Fredric Jameson's works on China and the Third World are read, cited, and, of course, challenged. Gayatri Spivak and Aijaz Ahmad respectively criticize Kristeva and Jameson for attempting to interpret China without knowing much about its language or culture, although their criticism may not seriously alter the reception of flawed works by famous Western scholars. White scholars cannot really be counted as a unity, but when they talk about Third World texts in collective terms such as national allegories, they are rejected as such. A feminist scholar like E. Ann Kaplan challenges such readings by frequently quoting from the other two groups of Chinese scholars and by examining a fifth-generation film like Hu Mei's *Army Nurse* as one depicting the personal/subjective versus the national/collective experience; but her challenge is not radical ("Traveling").[3]

What holds the following discussion together is the focus of my choice, which looks into the discoveries of China-based scholars and filmmakers, particularly in their encounters with the West during the past fifteen years. These discoveries have constructed a discourse that critic-scholars in China refer to as contemporary Chinese film culture. Scholars have fully realized the competition from overseas scholars, especially those who are bilingual and eager to become authoritative interpreters of Chinese culture (Chen Xiaoming, "Return" 69). The hierarchy of language here—"with English and French at the top"—gives Chinese scholars travelling to Western countries a great advantage in such a competition (Kaplan, "Travelling" 137). As a result, China-based scholars, whose observations on the rapid development of Chinese media and

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[2] Ien Ang's article, "Can One Say No to Chineseness? Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm," explains why it is so by analyzing not only experiences of people with Chinese ethnicity living outside Greater China, but also situations in the context of Western academia.

[3] See also E. Ann Kaplan, "Problematizing Cross-cultural Analysis: The Case of Women in the Recent Chinese Cinema."

culture are on a continuous basis that is less arbitrary or fragmented, cannot make their voices heard due to the problem of language. I hope to make efforts in this direction, since Mainland China is where all fifth and younger generations of filmmakers come from, as does the reality that they represent, recreate and reflect upon through their works.

1. In Search of a National Form

Although Chinese literature and other arts have learned many things from the West, we have almost never heard about "nationalizing literature" or "nationalizing painting" etc. The nationalization of film, however, was an issue raised from the moment film came to China and became the subject of a heated debate throughout the 1980s. The rationale behind this idea was explained and elaborated by Luo Yijun through a series of articles published between 1981 and 1988:

> Having originated in the West, film is an article of "importation." An imported art, when transplanted in the national soil, has to go through a process of importing, digesting, and absorbing. Only then can it become true art of one's own nation. [...] Foreign art is imported to represent the Chinese soul, whose unique qualities and spirit are to be assimilated with the style of art. This requires tailoring and improving the imported art so that it possesses national characteristics. (Rong Weijing 129)

Summarizing Luo's ideas, Li Shaobai defines "film nationalization" as the task to develop both "national form" and "national content" in films, which "should take into consideration the psychology, customs, aesthetics, and appreciation habits of the people" ("Rethinking" 283).

Since both Chinese filmmakers and critics never had much doubt about the national content, the focus of the debate was mainly on the problem of national form, which was closely related to two other lines of discussions respectively on film aesthetics and innovation.[4] The fact that these theoretical debates lasted for a decade and involved many Chinese scholars amazed Western scholars. Semsel called the debate on film nationalization "a theoretical phenomenon with a distinctly Chinese flavor," since strictly speaking "the subject does not belong to the realm of film aesthetics" (97). Chris Berry, a prominent scholar of Chinese cinema, found that the key terms used in the debate—*minzu*, *minzu xingshi*, *minzuhua* and so forth—were "applied almost automatically, and without any rationalization, to the great majority of esteemed works" ("Race"

[4] Semsel places articles debating "film innovation" in Chapter V—after the one on "film nationalization"—and includes a few critical articles on Xie Jin film in his *Chinese Film Theory*. The discussions on film aesthetics include articles by Zhong Dianfei and other famous critics.

47).[5] Paul Clark, probably finding "nationalization" too vague, used "sinification" instead ("Sinification of Cinema" 175), which is translated from *zhongguohua* (literally China-ization), a synonym of *minzuhua* used by Deng Xiaoping.

Borrowing terms from Frédéric Loliée's *Short History of Comparative Literature* (1965), Rong Weijing suggests that the "proposal of film nationalization" has to do with the superior "patriotic pride" and the "never-dying anxious heart for victory" (139-40). I agree with her but also think that the debates on film nationalization, aesthetics, and innovation are conscious justification of the previous neglect of film form—a non-literary and thus marginal sign system—over several decades. The search for a form in the name of nation is a phenomenon implying how much heavier ideology was than aesthetics. When scholars brought up ideas and issues that would influence filmmaking in the 1980s and 1990s with a "legitimate" reason, they held three basic positions.

Those from the first position affirm the existence of a national form, by which one can tell a film's nation of origin without knowing what language is spoken. When trying to tell what is a Chinese film form, many scholars have studied what Chinese film may borrow from traditional art forms and aesthetic principles. Ni Zhen ("Classical") and An Jingfu ("Pain") discuss the affinity between Chinese landscape painting and cinematographic signification in terms of "spatial consciousness" and Taoist ideas, drawing examples from films by Chen Kaige and Hou Hsiao-hsien. Lin Niantong and Liang Tianming examine the visual composition in Chinese films in terms of *you* (roaming), a principle of image-making in both painting and poetics (Lin Niantong, "Study" 189; Liang Tianming 65).[6] Leo Ou-Fan Lee seeks reasons for early films' rather static camera, reliance on mise-en-scène (instead of montage), and preference of long and medium shots over close-ups, in the appreciation of traditional opera. The camera's

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[5] While *minzu* is mostly translated into "nation" and *minzuhua* "nationalization," *Minzu xingshi* is translated by D.W. Fokkema (*Literary Doctrine in China and the Soviet Influence, 1956-1960*) and others as "national form." "National form," like "literary script," is a term borrowed from Russian. (Li Shaobai, "Rethinking" 288). Berry suggested in his article that *minzu* should be translated as "race" and *minzuhua* "race-ization" ("Race" 47-48), but "nationalization" is a better word here because of its bigger connotation. In Chinese, *minzu* is sometimes used interchangeably with *guojia* (country), and when the Chinese say "our nation," they do not mean just "our race" or our "Han Chinese majority group"—as Berry suggests they do. In fact, *minzu dianying* or "national film," to many scholars, includes "minority films" that represent lives of minority people (Zhang Wéi 60). See related discussions in Zhang Yingjin's "From 'Minority Film' to 'Minority Discourse': Questions of Nationhood and Ethnicity in Chinese Cinema."

[6] In Chinese landscape painting, a diffuse perspective or multiple station viewpoint is used instead of focused or single viewpoints in Western classical paintings. Diffuse viewpoints allow a broader scale of visual composition, permitting the production of horizontal or vertical long rolls, which are painted as if the viewpoint is moving—something similar to tracking shots. A Western filmmakers like German documentary director Ulrike Ottinger finds such ideas in "Chinese nature-painting" useful, and adopted a camera style of "rolling out the scroll, focusing in on details, wandering to and fro" (Bergstrom 44-46).

position is like an audience's view, always seeing an artistic world from a distance (12). Catherine Woo explains the "Chinese montage" by citing a famous poem:

> Withered vines, aged tree, evening crows
> Small bridge, flowing water, village huts
> Ancient road, west winds, lean horse
> Evening sun slants west
> A heart-torn man at the edge of heaven.[7]

The poem juxtaposes many images without actually connecting them through verbs, leaving the impression of fragmentation to some, and of suggestiveness between landscapes and inner feelings to others (21). When pursuing the kind of artistic atmosphere in the poem, filmmakers can either use long tracking shots linking images from frame to frame, or simply juxtapose images shot by shot. Including discussions from all of the above perspectives, Lin Niantong's *Chinese Film Aesthetics* is an attempt to establish a systematized theory.[8]

Early filmmakers like Zheng Junli and Han Shaoyi wrote about their use of ideas from traditional arts, which is a practice continued by directors of the third and fourth generations, as demonstrated by Luo Yijun and Xu Hong's article on third-generation director Shui Hua ("Lending") and Shaozhou's critique in *Homeland Memories* ("Emotion"). Even countertradition directors of the younger generations, who were heavily influenced by Western ideas of filmmaking, still make every effort to make films "unique" and "Chinese" (Bai Xiaoding 35).

Scholars also had different opinions on whether, and what, film should learn from traditional Chinese arts. Luo Yijun argues that the "cinematography of Chinese film cannot borrow easily the representation techniques from [Chinese] painting," since an ontological difference lies between the two concepts ("Review" 117).[9] Instead of pursuing the exactness or likeness—the core of the Western mimetic tradition in arts, Chinese artists celebrate a spiritual transmission—a play between the likeness and unlikeness. In other words, Chinese painting sacrifices the physical resemblance and thus avoids the dilemma of Western art—being "torn between two ambitions: one, primarily aesthetic, namely the expression of spiritual reality

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[7] This poem, titled "Autumn Thoughts in the Tune of *Sky Pure Sand*," was written by Ma Zhiyuan (1260-1324).

[8] Lin Niantong's *Chinese Film Aesthetics* (1991), a mostly overlooked work, is a valuable source that includes all major thoughts in this vein. Its earlier form is a 1985 article published in *Modern Chinese Literature*.

[9] This is also why "Chinese animations enjoy high international prestige in the film forum," as Luo Yijun continues to discuss, because "animations do not require close imitation of the real world." Cartoons learning from traditional plain sketches and cartoons based on watercolor paintings, which are even more peculiar to the Chinese and are not to be found in other countries, have both enjoyed international popularity ("Review" 117).

wherein the symbol transcended its model; the other, purely psychological, namely the duplication of the world outside" (Bazin 12). Film, however, cannot do what painting does. Luo suggests that Chinese film should turn to written and oral literature for narrative techniques ("Review" 118). This thought is elaborated in an article by Ma Junxing, who praises narrative techniques in early swordsman films as pioneer works in the search for a national form, since they are deeply rooted in Chinese narrative arts (14-15). The Oscar hit *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2001) from Ang Lee, which blends traditional swordsman rhetoric and poetic landscapes with modern techniques, proves how much may be gleaned from traditional Chinese arts to make films for today's international audiences.

A younger scholar, Zhang Wei, offers a rebuttal of the above views by arguing that traditional Chinese art and culture have restricted the development of Chinese film. He points out that from the Confucian emphasis on the interest of nation-state to Taoist teaching of human beings as part of the great Nature, from Chinese landscape paintings with an everlasting distanced view to the great emphasis placed on morality instead of emotion in literature, all the teachings have the intention to eliminate "subjectivity" and "diversity." He suggests that the rebellion against tradition should be part of "film nationalization" ("Rebellion" 32-38).

Regarding the search for a "national form," a few critics and filmmakers from another position argued that the term was not appropriate. Han Xiaolei claimed that the film art was "a result of explorations" by filmmakers of all countries, and thus it did "not belong to any single nation." In other countries, he said, film was "discussed in terms of school, trend and style, but not in terms of nation." (He probably would not say the same today.) Agreeing with Han, Yang Yanjin suggests that "we should stress the national spirit and characteristics in film content, but there is no such problem as the nationalization of form" (Li Shaobai, "Rethinking" 288). Yang himself is a fourth-generation director, who was once very keen on the heavy use of various cinematographic and editing techniques in early 1980s, finding no problem in combining "both the heritage of traditional Chinese film and the influence of Western cinema" (Ma Ning, "Notes" 65). When commenting on a film regarded by other critics as having a good national form, Shao Mujun said that he could not "find differences between this film and foreign films concerning narrative method, characterization, and other details." Thus he regarded "the accuracy in, and depth of, the representation of a nation" as the only standard to judge whether a film has a national characteristic (Xiao Xiao 31).

The third position, as Rong Weijing and many other scholars hold, is that film creation would naturally acquire the "nationalism," or rather, national characteristics, from the nation's history and culture, and thus "film nationalization" should be "understood through an integration

of content and form" and as a "dialectical unity of history and time" (131-33). Her idea echoes Ernest Renan's 1882 article titled "What Is a Nation":

> A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, [...] the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. (19)

The immediate question of how to achieve the unity of the past and the present is what links film nationalization to film innovation, which are actually two intertwined lines of concern from the early period of Chinese film history (Shaozhou, "Review" 17-22). Zhong Dafeng defines "artistic innovation" as "the breakthrough of traditional artistic values and creative norms," while Dai Jinhua thinks that the point of departure for any "artistic innovation" is from the "artistic form," and that "the tradition exists, revives, and reconstructs itself exactly in the process of innovation" (Shaozhou, "Review" 18). The shift of focus from nationalization to innovation here led to a reevaluation of previous film works.

In reviewing early Chinese cinema, scholars find that there were plenty of prejudices against the pursuit of film's formal perfection. For instance, Dan Duyu, the director of *Sea Oath* (1922)—China's first romantic drama and the first film with an original screenplay—was known also for his excellence in cinematography and art design. He used the screen as an extended canvas, focused on beautiful landscapes and female protagonists,[10] and managed to make each frame exquisite even though the shooting and post-production conditions could hardly compare with those of today. His films, however, were said to resemble "the flavor of Western shadowplay," as if the visual spectacle was not something manageable by Chinese filmmakers (Li Shaobai and Hong Shi 270-71). Critics regarded Dan's works and early films by Shi Dongshan as examples of "aestheticism" displaying "an obsession with visual qualities and a distancing from socio-political issues" (Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei 304). The re-djscovery of Fei Mu, especially the similarities in film language between his *Spring in a Small Town* (1948) and the representative works of Japanese director Ozu and Taiwan director Hou Hsiao-hisen, led to discussions on the possible model of an "Oriental film" (Ying Xiong, "Spring" 11).

Chinese critics generally agree that there have been "five waves of artistic creations in Chinese film history: the 1930s, the 1940s, 1959, 1964, and the New Era" (Ying Xiong, "Dazzling" 50). A re-examination of these five waves resulted in a new recognition of films made

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[10] The actresses for Dan's films, including Yin Mingzhu (*Sea Oath*) and Fu Wenhao (*The Revival of an Old Well*, 1923), were famous "Westernized Chinese misses" in Shanghai at the time, and who went to English schools before they became actresses (Li Shaobai and Hong Shi 271).

in the 1930s and 40s and severe criticisms on later works under both Soviet and Hollywood influences (Ma Ning, "Textual" 25). The most prominent director of the Third Generation (often considered as the First Generation Chinese director of the New China), Xie Jin, became a focus of study, since his repertoire includes "classics" from all the last three waves (Li Yiming, "Xie Jin" 7; Ying Xiong, "Dazzling" 50). Despite the fact that he is reportedly the only director drawing over a hundred million audiences to such films as *Legend of Tianyun Mountain* and *Hibiscus Town* (Wang Shuo, *Ignorant* 3), Xie Jin was accused of reproducing Chinese versions of Hollywood melodrama (Semsel, *Chinese Film* 112). Starting from Zhu Dake's "The Drawback of Xie Jin's Model" and Li Jie's "Xie Jin's Era Should End," two unsparing articles published in *Wenhui Daily*, many film critic-scholars re-evaluated Xie Jin's cinema with an overall negative tone. Li Yiming, Dai Jinhua, Wang Hui, Qiu Tiancao, and Ying Xiong analyzed Xie Jin film in terms of its position in Chinese film history, its way of representing Chinese history, its encoding between politics and gender, its use of women's images, and its focus on ordinary people and family. These articles have offered important insights by pointing out where the norms of Xie Jin films—the highest point of the Third Generation—exactly lay.

The fact that most scholars taking part in debates on film aesthetics, innovation, and nationalization during the 1980s appreciated early works of the Fifth Generation has to do with its rebelling against such norms. Take the issue of film form for example. Xie Jin says on more than one occasion that he is afraid of being praised just for "the cinematography of a scene" or "the music," since he thinks what matters most are the characters. "If the characters do not leave any impression, I would say, the film is not good" (Ying Xiong, "Dazzling" 56). Xie Jin's attitude is rather typical among older filmmakers and critics from the theatrical tradition who emphasize characters more than anything else. When we look at Xie Jin's film characters, we can see that they are all configured to serve the need of politics/ideology. That is why the Fifth Generation's over-consciousness with film form won applause for reversing the over-emphasis on ideological content, but at the same time received criticism for its weakness in configuring characters. Moreover, the fifth-generation filmmakers' insistence on *showing* instead of *telling*, through film and not verbal means, effectively eliminates the didactic tone of most films made in the Seventeen-Year Period (1949-66) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), and Xie Jin films made in the New Era (after 1979).

With a static camera that "was obligated to follow that rhythm of life," *Yellow Earth*, for example, seems to reveal the way of life as it has always been: "The sun comes up over there, and the sun sets over there, day after day. Nothing changes, everything's the same, quiet, very calm" (Semsel, *Chinese Film* 139). As Zhang Yimou writes in notes on the cinematography of the film,

the theme "is the deep love for man and earth, a persistent pursuit for the future" ("Yellow Earth" 66-67). Many believe that "the boundless magnificence of the heavens, the supporting vastness of the earth, [and] the racing flow of the Yellow River" in the film represent "the sustaining strength and endurance of a nation" (Barmé and Minford, *Seeds* 259). It is in the everlasting landscape of the birthplace of the Chinese nation that scholars everywhere see a new film language, a new national form that rebels against the traditional way of representing Chinese history and cultural heritages. In other words, such a film was perceived as an *updating* of the notion of film nationalization by putting the tradition into a concurrent dynamics, rather than merely looking back at the tradition for artistic traits (Zhang Wei, "Rebellion" 37). Some scholars liked the modern sense in *Yellow Earth*, others see it as a return to the tradition, but no one can deny that the very belief in natural landscapes as having the power to move is traditionally Chinese and universal.

The Fifth Generation's breakthrough was recognized as "the breakthrough" exactly because it recognized its own cultural ground first. After *One and Eight*'s reversal of every detail about the filmmaking tradition, *Yellow Earth*'s impact proved to the directors that borrowing something from the tradition can take them further down the road of innovation. Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou and Wu Ziniu all told Tony Rayns that they found early classics "both surprising and interesting," although "their reluctance to discuss them in any detail [betrayed] a general impatience with the past and a desire to get on with the future" (Rayns, "Chinese Vocabulary" 9). After they brought Chinese cinema into the international arena, they learned that the narration of the nation beyond aesthetics is a more challenging task.

The following discussions on the ideological issues of *nation* and *nationalism* in new Chinese cinema will take two general directions. Section 2 will briefly examine the so-called revolution/war films, which make up the biggest part in Chinese cinema from the founding of New China in 1949 to the end of the Cultural Revolution. These films, produced under the direct guidance of *realpolitik*, established the "correct," sophisticated, and "traditional" cinematic modes of narrating nation and patriotism as the rigid norms that both fourth and fifth generations intended to overthrow. Through a reading of three Wu Ziniu films, I will demonstrate how this fifth-generation specialist of war films redefines nation and patriotism. A reading of Feng Xiaoning's war trilogy and Ye Daying's unexpected *Red Cherry* (1995) will follow the analysis of Wu Ziniu to reveal how non-fifth-generation directors reflect upon the same issues. Section 3 will take up a question raised in Chapter 1, namely, whether such fifth-generation directors as Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige qualify as cultural translators, through a review of how their imagined folk customs affect the construction of China as a nation in the world, and how the

Chinese filmmakers try to survive in the narrow gap between a nationalist censorship and the pressure of a commodity society.

2. From Nationalism to Sur-nationalism?

A major part of the "recent cinematic tradition," against which the Fifth Generation rebelled, is the norm of revolution/war films. Many second and third-generation filmmakers matured by making revolution/war films, while fourth, fifth, and younger generations grew up watching an impressive repertoire of such films. The genre of "war film" emerged in China in the late 1930s, "when the Sino-Japanese war broke out on a national scale and the KMT (Nationalist) government retreated to Wuhan and Chongqing" from the capital Nanjing (Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei 355).[11] The Chinese call the eight-year Sino-Japanese War from 1937-45 the Anti-Japan Period, and films about the period Anti-Japan films. Although China was invaded by many Western powers as well as Japan between the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, the Sino-Japanese War was the only period in modern Chinese history when more than half of the Chinese territory was occupied and over 35 million people were killed. The Anti-Japan sentiment has been the strongest nationalist sentiment shared by people from mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and other Asian countries, and Anti-Japan films have continued to enjoy popularity to the present day.

Another genre that developed after 1949 is the revolution film, with a notable body of "spy drama" (Berry, "If China Can Say No" 140) works focusing on the Communist's underground struggles under the KMT's white terror, both before and after the Sino-Japanese War. This genre also includes films portraying heroes in the Nationalist revolution of 1919 and a series of films representing major events, battles, and historical figures that led the Communist army to victory. These films can also be seen as historical films, since they are a kind of historiography supplementing what we call "Chinese revolution history," which is a mandatory subject in most universities. Instead of portraying patriotism with a nationalist accent, revolution films depict patriotism by revealing the sacrifices and heroic deeds of Communist leaders, soldiers, and believers, who liberated China through long and harsh battles.

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[11] The Earliest works including *Protect Our Land* (1938) by Shi Dongshan, *Eight Hundred Heroic Soldiers* (1938) by Ying Yunwei, and *The Sky Rider* (1940) by Sun Yunwei were all produced from Nationalist-controlled studios, configuring patriotic heroes fighting with a national pride. During the Japanese occupation of the Manchuria, the Japanese attempted to establish a "Greater Eastern Asia Film Sphere" as part of the cultural assimination. See Shelley Stephenson, "'Her Traces Are Found Everywhere': Shanghai, Li Xianglan, and the 'Greater Eastern Asian Film Sphere."

Institutionally speaking, August First Film Studio, a major film studio under the establishment of the People's Liberation Army, has been playing an important role in the making of revolution/war films.[12] The mission of August First, and the goal of revolution/war films, has pre-determined that revolution/war films constitute "one of the most significant parts of the Communist propaganda machinery in the mainland." Revolution/war films have continued to enjoy their mainstream status and popularity, "with only a brief interruption during the early years of the Cultural Revolution" (Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei 355). In fact, *leitmotif* (*zhuxuanlü*) instead of mainstream is what Chinese officials have been calling films presenting positive images of China and the Chinese people, especially after 1991 (Berry, "A Nation T(w/o)o" 27), and most revolution/war films automatically belong to the category.[13]

Zhongying Audio and Video Press, a branch of the China Film Cooperation, started to publish a VCD (video compact disc) series titled *One Hundred Patriotic Education Classics Series* in 1996. This series includes a body of revolution/war films that are now canonized as "patriotic classics." The collection shows a good variety of revolution/war films. There are legends about courageous and intelligent larger-than-life heroes during the Sino-Japanese War, such as Li Xiangyang *Guerillas on the Plain* (1953). There are stories about extra-ordinary child heroes in both Anti-Japan and civil wars, including Zhang Ga in *Zhang Ga, a Boy Soldier* (1963) and Pan Dongzi in *Sparkling Red Star* (1972), respectively directed by Cui Wei and Li Jun. The most noteworthy aspect is that many films reveal women's direct involvement in frontier combats as well as performing underground tasks. Ling Zifeng's *Daughters of China* (1949) was the first screen representation of an all-female squadron. Xie Jin's *Red Detachment of Women* (1961) is probably the most famous film depicting the maturing of a female soldier. Cui Wei's *Song of Youth* (1959) and Yan Jizhou's *Struggle in an Ancient City* (1963) configure several female underground Communists.

In short, while representations of struggles and battles between the Communists and the Nationalists have a heavy accent in terms of history-writing, Anti-Japan films glorify uncompromising patriotism, or nationalism in a narrow sense. The films that I will study in the following sections are all works offering controversial reflections upon nation and nationalism, though some are box office hits and some are box office flops. Wu Ziniu and other fifth-

[12] August First is celebrated as the birthday of People's Liberation Army.

[13] The *leitmotif*'s other themes include portraits of honest and anti-corruption Communist cadres who always place the interest of the country and people in front of their own. The 2000 box office champion *The Choice of Life and Death* (*Shengsi Jueze*) depicts an anti-corruption Communist who would rather put his bribed wife behind bars than giving in to a chain of corrupt officials. The 1996 box office champion was also a leitmotif film based on the life story of Kong Fansen, a Communist who went to work in Tibet and

generation directors rebel against the norm of traditional war films by replacing patriotism with humanitarianism, an approach that they have been taking since 1983. Feng Xiaoning and Ye Daying update the understanding of patriotism and humanitarianism by bringing in characters of other nationalities, in an attempt to transcend the meaning of nationalism across national boundaries. I will read the film works in relation to two factors in China's cultural context: the spreading of commodity culture within China, and, the increasing interactions between China and other nations.

2.1 Wu Ziniu: From Patriotism to Humanitarianism

It is not really a coincidence that the fifth-generation debut work was a film about war. When the Youth Crew, including Zhang Junzhao, Zhang Yimou, He Qun and Xiao Feng, decided to shoot *One and Eight*, the screenplay by Zhang Ziliang and Wang Jicheng sat in the literary department of Guangxi Film Studio for two years—no director dared or cared to touch it (Bai Xiaoding 30). Although the film caused an earthquake within the Chinese film circle, it did not pass censorship until over one hundred changes had been done. The fact that it has never been released overseas makes the film an everlasting wonder to scholars outside China, and may explain why none of the four members of the crew has made a war film again.

Immediately followed *One and Eight* was Wu Ziniu's *Secret Decree* (1984), the first mainland production presenting the Nationalists fighting the Japanese directly and positively. (Since Chiang Kei-shek and his KMT Nationalist officials refused to fight the Japanese until one of his generals, Zhang Xueliang, put him under house arrest near Xi'an in 1936—which is known as the Xi'an Incident—and forced him to do so, the Communists had a hard time fighting both the Japanese and the Nationalist armies and thus were somehow reluctant to give full credit to the Nationalists in the matter of Anti-Japanese War.[14]) Wu made the film into more of a thriller than a conventional war film and created the box office record that year. It is so far the only Fifth Generation war film that enjoyed both critical acclaim and commercial success. The success of *Secret Decree* gave Wu Ziniu's studio leaders confidence to let him make his next feature, *Dove Tree* (1985), which deals with the battles and conflicts on the Sino-Vietnamese border (1979-85).

Most scenes of Wu Ziniu's *Dove Tree* are shot in heavy fog—a typical natural phenomenon of the region. He uses the fog as a narrative drive to push forward the plot, by

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helped Tibetan people to improve the quality of life. In order to devote all his energy to the Tibetans, he went there without his family. He died of illness and fatigue.

[14] Cheng Yin made a film titled *Xi'an Incident* (1981), representing this actual event that shocked the entire country.

changing the look of misty landscapes—a cinematic spectacular as unique as those created by Zhang Yimou and other fifth-generation members. The film is not really a war film: we hear explosions, attacks, birds chirping, but not much talking. Through the fog, we see the encounter between a Chinese soldier and a Vietnamese army nurse: he spares her life, while she tends four wounded Chinese soldiers. When another Chinese soldier kills her by mistake, again due to the fog blurring his sight, his comrades are very sad. When the stretcher carriers come, the wounded soldiers insist that they first carry the Vietnamese nurse to the border and bury her in her homeland. Wu Ziniu shot the film when actual conflicts were occurring. In order to achieve a sense of reality, he invited seven soldiers to act in the film—six of whom went to the frontier twice (Zhang Xuan 62-63).

Although the film was warmly received in critical circles during a few special screenings, it failed, unfortunately, to pass the censorship board and was regarded as a work with a "serious political mistake." The Vice Minister of Culture and Director of the Film Bureau then talked to Wu Ziniu, who asked him to give a speech of self-criticism in a Beijing conference, in which he expressed his views on war to over two hundred listeners:

> My mistake lies in the fact that I approached the war as merely an abstract concept and overlooked its real nature. I was very naïve in attempting to approach the war from a macro-perspective, thinking that despite the right and wrong sides, despite the brave sacrifices in wars, people all hate wars and thus never stop reflecting upon them. With this belief, I tried to describe the relationship between war and man, between man and man in a war, while configuring Chinese soldiers as humanitarian beings who do not seek revenge even after falling into a shameful ambush. [...] War is cruel, and hatred in war is unsolvable and sublime; but people in wars, who have not forgotten that they are also human beings, win morally. (Wu Ziniu 291)

Dove Tree was put into a special storage and may stay there for some years, and it was not the only film that ended up that way—Zhou Xiaowen's directorial debut *In Their Prime* (1986) is another film that has never been released in China for almost the same reasons.

In Their Prime was also shot on the Sino-Vietnamese border where soldiers of both countries were in hostile confrontation. It is another "war film" showing no real battles or heroic deeds. Zhou Xiaowen reveals how Chinese soldiers suffered from hunger, mosquitoes, humidity, and hot weather, under various psychological tensions. The film cuts back and forth between peace and war, between Beijing and the southern border, accenting a strong doubt about "civilization" in warring conditions. In a kindergarten of Beijing, a cute little boy shoots at a doll with his toy machine guy; in a cave of the frontier, the soldiers watch a snake swallowing a big mouse. At the frontier, the Chinese commander runs into a Vietnamese woman with a baby, whose sad look and apparent fear stop him from harming them. As soon as he turns away,

however, the woman drops a hand grenade behind him. He shoots back, and nothing replies to his gun shots except for the baby's cries. The most problematic sequence is probably the one shot in the real setting of the Beijing Revolution and Military Museum, where a pregnant woman is arguing with the commander in front of a huge missile model. She wants to keep the baby even though her husband died in the war, while he is persuading her to have an abortion: their voices then turn into unintelligible echoes (Ge Hua, "A Taichi Matrix" 350-51).

Although the film sends an anti-war message and presents humanitarian values, it annoyed some officers of military departments for its representation of puzzled and confused feelings at the front and back home. They attacked the film as a distortion of Chinese soldiers' images (Chai Xiaofeng, *Zhou Xiaowen* 44). Zhang Yingjin claims that both *Dove Tree* and *In Their Prime* were banned because their "humanitarian representation of wars was so emotionally powerful and ideologically subversive," and that the "ban was effective in that no more subversive war films have appeared in the mainland since then" (*Encyclopedia* 356). I agree with the first part of his comment, but have reservations about the latter, since we cannot say Wu Ziniu's later works and recent war films by Feng Xiaoning and Ye Daying are not "subversive" just because they are not banned. The only released film having the Sino-Vietnamese conflict in the background was Xie Jin's *Garlands at the Foot of the Mountain* (1984); it does not really deal with the war itself, but concerns a soldier's life and duty. After 1986, no film on the Sino-Vietnamese war has been made.

Wu Ziniu came back with an equally controversial film *Evening Bell* in 1988. This time, most of the scenes are shot in dim light. The story is about the experiences of five Communist soldiers who are ordered to clean up a battlefield after the surrender of the Japanese. The film opens with a landscape of tombs: numerous white banners for the dead are rustling in the wind, and an old peasant is chopping the pillar of a Japanese army's watchtower. The next sequence cuts to a field, where a group of Japanese soldiers report their names and hometowns to an army secretary, who writes them down on a piece of white cloth, then ties the rolled cloth to a pigeon and sets it towards the Japan Sea. The soldiers are burnt in their gas-soaked clothes. A couple of them are shot by their officer while trying to run away. When the Communist soldiers come, they bury the remains of their comrades, and, reluctantly, also cover corpses of Japanese soldiers with earth. The sight of two young widows crying over the tombs brings up painful memories for the Chinese soldiers: the wife of a tall soldier had jumped into a well for fear of being raped but was pulled out by Japanese soldiers who gang raped her; the lieutenant recalls how his entire family was killed. Looking at the Japanese captives, the Chinese soldiers cannot help thinking: do they deserve to live?

Then, the Chinese soldiers discover an isolated group of Japanese soldiers guarding an ammunition depot, who have not yet learned about their country's surrender. When they hear that the war is over, they have a decision to make: to surrender, or to show loyalty to their emperor by killing themselves. A Chinese woman in rags runs out of the cave, telling the soldiers that there are two more Chinese men there, and that these Japanese have eaten one other Chinese man. She dies soon after. The Chinese soldiers are again filled with agony and get prepared for a fight outside the cave. In the short span of a couple of days, so many incidents irritate them that they are constantly turning thoughts over in their mind: to kill, or not to kill. When the sun rises again, the Japanese soldiers surrender, their officer kills himself, and with a loud sound, the watchtower suddenly collapses. Such is the ending of *Evening Bell*.

The leaders of August First Film Studio, who invited Wu Ziniu to direct a film with his own script, did not expect something like *Evening Bell* and thus did not pass it until it had been revised four times. When the film was finally sent to the Film Bureau, to Wu Ziniu's surprise, it passed right away and was named one of the ten best by Chen Haosu, the Vice Minister of Culture who was in charge of film production. Then, as we mentioned, not even one copy of it was sold in the releasing event of the year, since in 1988 people were looking for entertainment films only. Just as Wu was feeling depressed again, his fortune changed. The Director of Berlinale came to Beijing and singled out *Evening Bell* from dozens of films presented to him, praising its anti-war spirit as corresponding to one of Berlinale's missions. After *Red Sorghum*, which also deals with the Anti-Japan theme in a humanitarian spirit, the Berlinale jury once again recognized a fifth-generation film's moral value and its unique rhetoric: the film was awarded a Silver Bear in 1989. At the ceremony, Wu Ziniu said:

> I believe that my Chinese colleagues are as happy as I am. In this exciting moment, all I want to say is: if a foreign army invades my country, I will fight for her without any hesitation; but if I have a chance to express my own thoughts before I die, I would say, "I hate all wars!" (Zhang Xuan 80)

We can see that even though Wu Ziniu had better luck with *Evening Bell*, its message is not really different from that of *Dove Tree*. With a Silver Bear, the film sold forty-seven copies in China.

Evening Bell did not bring much benefit to the August First Studio, but it did bring Wu Ziniu a fame that attracted investment from both Mainland China and Taiwan for *Nanjing 1937* (1995). Even though there is still hostility between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, when it comes to the issue of Sino-Japanese War, Chinese everywhere share the same nationalist

sentiment.[15] *Nanjing 1937* tells of the less known holocaust on the Eastern side of the globe and is in many ways comparable to *Schindler's List*. The Nanjing Massacre is a historical event that always kindles rage in the Chinese: 300,000 Chinese were brutally murdered, including 110,000 soldiers and over 20,000 raped women. With the biggest budget he had ever had (approximately 25 million RMB or 3 million USD), Wu Ziniu did a few things that he had not done in his previous films. He went to Japan to look for actors, and to his surprise, he received letters from many ordinary Japanese people who expressed wishes to do something for the film as a kind of redemption for their fathers' generation's crime (Zhang Xuan 103). As a result, Japanese roles in the film are mostly played by Japanese actors which is rare in Chinese films.[16]

From various shooting plans, Wu Ziniu chose to view the war from the perspective of common people, focusing on a family with a Chinese husband, his daughter, his pregnant Japanese wife, and her daughter, so that he can deal with the nationalist issue on both national and family levels. Moreover, in *Nanjing 1937*, Wu abandoned his signature style, an almost eccentrically mysterious touch in his narration, and instead, he "handled such challenging subjects as rape and senseless murder with aplomb and sensitivity," as a student in an American university described:

> The movie is horrifically violent, full of killing, rape, mass graves and other horrific crimes committed by the Japanese, including a historically verified account of a Japanese soldier giving a baby a stick of dynamite and a Samurai-style killing competition between two soldiers that hits the triple digits. (Chan Ted)

Such direct, unsparing, and realistic visual presentation of "live violence" (like the way documentaries present the event) is far more effective than a tearful recounting of a brutal murder or a beastly rape, and would leave a wound that cannot be cured or soothed even by the survival of the protagonists.

On the one hand, *Nanjing 1937* was praised by many high officials (who attended its premiere) on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and attracted a large number of viewers for its subject matter. On the other hand, many critics and audiences found Wu Ziniu's *usual control* of nationalist sentiment with a spirit of humanitarianism flat and even irritating, because they could not air their grievances through watching such a film (Wu Guanping, "Between" 50). This may

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[15] We learn that, as requested by Taiwan investors, many famous actors were invited from Taiwan, including Qin Han, who volunteered to act in the film because his father—a former Nationalist commander—was in Nanjing at the time.

[16] From then on, Chinese filmmakers all began to invite Japanese actors to perform in their films. Jiang Wen's crew of *Devil at the Doorstep* (1999) included a number of Japanese students, who were asked to

also explain why Chinese audiences never liked *Evening Bell*, and why *National Anthem* (1999), a film made as a present to the Fiftieth Anniversary of the People's Republic, turned out to be the fourth biggest hit in 1999. The protagonists of *National Anthem*, Nie Er and Tian Han, the musician and the dramatist who composed China's national anthem, were hot-blooded youths showing a deep love for their motherland when the Japanese turned three provinces in Northeast China into the so-called Manchuria, and turned the Chinese people into slaves. The government investment may play a big role here, but Wu Ziniu also loosened up his *usual control*.

Admitted or not, a "healthy" nationalism that affirms the Chinese national spirit and encourages them to make their country stronger has been a timeless key in attracting a good audience in China. When approaching any delicate matter that may challenge the national pride, any artist has to be careful not to become a suspect of *hanjian* (traitor to China). Thus, Li Yang sees that even just to persuade people to study English, he has to present a good cause: to study English and the computer for the love of the country and to make the country stronger. In Zhang Yuan's documentary *Crazy English*, we see him telling a *Time* magazine reporter that he often shows pictures of the Japanese killing the Chinese to elementary school students, who grow up with Japanese animations and electronics. He says that he wants to tell the young Chinese, just as older filmmakers do, that a weak nation will be beaten up, which happened to China more than once in history. Without forgetting China's reality today, Li Yang also tells his listeners to learn English and the computer well, so they can "make money internationally." The number of audiences Li Yang has attracted is proof that nationalism is not in conflict with commodity culture as many of traditional values are. Another proof would be *China Can Say No* (1996), a nationalist book with an anti-American sentiment that sold out "its first print run or 130,000 copies" in a few weeks (Berry, "If China Can Say No" 130), not to mention the number of pirate copies.[17]

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learn to act and talk like their grandfathers by watching war documentaries and old Chinese Anti-Japan films (Jiang Wen 6).

[17] After the Tiananmen Incident of 1989, the US attacked China on various issues from human rights to copyright, from the Most Favored Nation issue to WTO entry. The frequent and severe criticisms of China, and the theory that China is the potential rival of the US, both frustrated and delighted the Chinese. The publication of *China Can Say No: A Choice of Politics and Attitude in the Post-Cold War Era* (1996) was a result of such Anti-US sentiment, but its publication in turn stirred up sentiment like never before. The authors of the book, Song Qiang, Zhang Zangzang, Qiao Bian, Tang Zhengyu, and Gu Qingsheng, are five young Chinese men who had not made their way to the US before writing the book. Rumors had that they turned down the American Embassy's invitation for a visit to the US. Borrowing ideas from Ishihara Shintaro and Morita Akio's 1990 bestseller *The Japan That Can Say No*, *China Can Say No* gives many

2.2 From Anti-British and Anti-Japanese to Anti-Fascist

One filmmaker who handles the issue of nationalism in a way similar to that of Li Yang is Feng Xiaoning, a contemporary of fifth-generation directors, who has updated third-generation war classics with new concepts rather than rebelling against the patriotic tradition.[18] Contrary to Wu Ziniu, Feng has never failed to pass the censorship board or to attract audiences. As a true believer of heroism, Feng Xiaoning always attempts to carry forward the national spirit and a patriotic passion (Wang Qiuhe 7). With the goal of making what Chinese audiences like to see, and the ambition to let world audiences know more about the true Chinese national spirit, he has produced a war trilogy including *Red River Valley* (1997), *Lover's Grief over the Yellow River* (1999) and *Purple Sunset* (2001). Although the regular "gang" of experts on Chinese film—both inside and outside China—have been rather indifferent towards these works, their winning of both government and audience awards in China, and their "patriotic sensations" and box office success have not gone unnoticed by non-film experts. Even though these films have not made their way to the West like many fifth-generation classics have, Western media has been watching them closely as a form of China's emerging new propaganda with immense agitating power.[19]

Writing, directing, and shooting all these films, Feng Xiaoning combines the fifth-generation traits of spectacular visuals, bright colors, and simple plots with a loud and clear patriotism. With a candid and honest attitude towards patriotism, Feng Xiaoning reaches out to an understanding of national spirit in an international context, while consciously challenging Western representations of Chinese history through films.

Set in Tibet's vast prairie, *Red River Valley*'s narrative structure is similar to that of *Red Sorghum*, and its main narrator, just as that of *Sorghum*, experiences the story as a boy. The film opens with a ritual in which a Han girl, Snow, is about to be "offered" to the River God as the sacrifice along with an ox, a sheep, and another girl. With the help of her brother, she escapes by jumping into the river. A Tibetan herdsman rescues her, and his family provides her shelter. Snow becomes a member of the family and lives like the Tibetans, following their religion and customs. Then, against the background of a serene lake and sacred snow-covered mountains, the love story between Snow and the herdsman unfolds. One day, the lovers save two British explorers buried under the snow. Rockman and Jones are the first foreigners receiving permission to enter Tibet.

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statistics to prove that China has become a powerful country. After the publication of *China Can Say No*, "books that 'say no' flooded the entire book market in an instant" (Dai Jinhua, "Behind" 161).

[18] Most scholars do not regard Feng Xiaoning as a fifth-generation member. He was one of art designers of *Red Elephant* (1982), co-directed by Zhang Jianya and Tian Zhuangzhuang, and began directing from 1990.

[19] See Tibet Information Network news at: http://www.tibetinfo.net/news-updates/nu090797.htm

When Rockman leaves for Britain, Jones falls ill and stays, discovering a paradise with pure-hearted people, while falling for the daughter of a tribal head, whose appearance is as beautiful as her singing. Then the film reveals the following images of paradise lost: "Enchanted with each other and their surroundings, two young lovers roll amid wildflowers in a Tibetan meadow beneath the snow-capped Himalayas. Then a drum roll sounds across the grassland like a gathering storm, and an army appears on the horizon" (Langfitt). During the next hour, we see how this British army led by Rockman destroys the peaceful land while slaughtering the Tibetan and Han people with guns, cannons, and dishonorable tricks.

For today's audiences, Rockman's reason for murdering and robbing in Tibet—"Tibet should be an independent country"—may sound familiar. As a Scots man, however, he cannot answer why "Scotland is not an independent country," a question posed by a Tibetan man who had studied in England. The tribal head refuses to provide food for Rockman's army. Showing an open hand to him, the tribal head says that Tibetan, Han (majority Chinese), Hui (Chinese Muslims), Man (Manchu minority), and other minorities are like fingers. He then closes his hand into a fist, saying, "If our ancestors united us into one big family, what is between the Tibetan and Han is a family business but not yours." The real cause for the British aggression, as Rockman explains to Jones, is the fear that the Russians, sending one exploration team after another, may occupy this virgin land first. What the British did not expect is how hard the Tibetan and Han people would fight for their land, which might lead to loss of lives, but not the national pride they are sharing. When the herdsman is the only one alive on the battlefield, Rockman recognizes him as the man who saved his life and offers to help, but the herdsman ignites the wine with the lighter that was a souvenir from Rockman.

Unwittingly accompanying Rockman as a captain and war correspondent, Jones finds the second trip to Tibet very different from the first. He is so agonized in seeing both Tibetan men and British soldiers dying around him that he almost puts a bullet into his head. What stops him is the sudden sight of the sacred mountains, which his father had talked about but had not seen. At the end of the film, he laments, "Father, why should we destroy their civilization with ours? Why change their world with ours? One thing is certain: these people will never give up and never disappear. And the immense land behind them is the Orient we will never conquer."

The *realisation-après* here makes *Red River Valley* and *Seven Years in Tibet*—the Hollywood adaptation of Austrian mountaineer Heinrich Harrer's memoir published in 1953, where Brad Pitt is a tutor of the young Dalai Lama—truly "a tale of two Tibets" (MacKinnon). Considering how both *Seven Years in Tibet* and Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* depict the process of how an ordinary man from the West enlightens an Eastern leader, Feng Xiaoning's story offers

a challenging text. Feng Xiaoning has the young, kind, inexperienced, and Chinese-speaking British man Jones educated by the Tibetan and Han Chinese about honor, patriotism, and the deep bonds among Chinese people with different ethnicity, while witnessing how the British "destroy priceless cultural history" in the name of "civilization."

Feng Xiaoning continued his quest to "build a floating bridge between nationalism and internationalism" in *Lover's Grief over the Yellow River*, another film dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the People's Republic and China's 1999 entry for an Oscar (Wu Guanping, "Between" 50).[20] The film tells the story of a former American pilot Owen, who is sent on the special task of taking photos of Japanese munitions factories in China around 1943. During an air-to-sea battle, he loses his partner who is very eager to seek revenge for his brother killed at Pearl Harbor. His plane catches fire, but he survives after a crash landing near the Great Wall, thanks to a Chinese boy who pulls him up from a cliff. The boy is soon killed by a bomb when Owen is taking his picture. Owen wakes up to see a beautiful female soldier, Angel, and her Eight-route detachment, whose commander assigns Angel, Heizi, and a few other soldiers to take Owen to Yan'an—the Communist base. Parallel to this *Saving-Private-Ryan* type of plot, is the love story between Owen and Angel. At first, he only admires her beauty, and her medical and English language abilities. Then he begins to respect her as a courageous and determined fighter. When he learns about her lingering memory of rape by the Japanese, which explains why she always keeps a hand grenade on her, both his love for her and his hatred of the Japanese reach a climactic point.

While walking through villages after a bloodbath, Owen witnesses two scenes as cruel and visually disturbing as those in *Nanjing 1937*: one reveals the remains of a baby that was rolled over and crushed by a millstone, the other shows how Japanese soldiers pour gas on a mother and her daughter and burn them alive. Owen also learns from Heizi about how his wife and son were killed in a gas chamber. He gradually understands why the Chinese soldiers, and even the bandits, would rather die than surrender to the Japanese: they value life as much as he does, but at the same time, they would rather die than live without dignity. And this is why both Angel and Heizi can sacrifice their lives for Owen's, so he can cross the Yellow River with the important film and Heizi's little girl—they want China to win so the children can have a better tomorrow. Although most scholars dismiss the film as a commercial production, a few critics at the same time express fascination about how well the film's seemingly fragile balance between nationalism and

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[20] Source from http://www.filmfestivals.com/academy/oscar_2000/3_foreign/foroscar1.htm. The film is a small-budget production of 3.8 million RMB (or 460 thousand USD), but was ranked at fourth place in China's box office list of 1999, published in *Film Art*, 3 (2000).

internationalism is accepted by Chinese audiences, especially, in a time when Anti-American sentiment was high (50).

If *Lover's Grief over the Yellow River* is still an Anti-Japanese film with both Chinese and Americans as heroes, *Purple Sunset* (2001), the last installment of Feng Xiaoning's war trilogy, discloses the fascist origin of the war. The film shifts viewpoints from its three protagonists: Yang, the sole survivor of a Japanese massacre; Naja, a Soviet Red Army doctor; and Akiko, a Japanese girl who came to "Manchuria" with her family when Japan invaded Northeast China in 1931. Talking to an invisible interviewer, Yang and Naja put together a story about some unforgettable days they spent together in the big forest of Daxing'an Mountains with Akiko.

The film begins with the Soviet Red Army's tanks crushing the Japanese army. A Red Army soldier saves Yang from the Japanese soldiers' last minute killing, and decides to send him back with the wounded. They get lost on their way and run into a Japanese base. After a brief battle, only Yang, Naja and another male Soviet soldier make a narrow escape. They find two Japanese girls: one bites on a pill and dies instantly, while the other is so scared that she drops her poison pill. Not able to kill her, Naja suggests that she lead the way. Unexpectedly, the girl takes them into a mine field where the Soviet man is killed. Naja is so angry that she points her gun at Akiko, but when she sees her helpless eyes, Naja cannot kill her. She gives a knife to Yang: "You are a man," she says in Russian. Holding the knife, scenes of the Japanese killing the Chinese, including his mother, come to his mind, but Yang cannot kill Akiko either. To get out of the forest, they have to stick together while confronting each other's prejudices. Saving each other's lives more than once, a friendship develops among the three.

Through flashbacks, we see Naja and Yang's painful memories of the war through the eyes of a Soviet soldier and an ordinary Chinese man respectively. Facing these two kind-hearted foreigners, Akiko begins to have doubts about the militarism that poisoned her as she grew up, and is able to see clearly Japan's shameful role in the war. When the three come to the Japanese base, they are shocked to see how the soldiers are killing their own people. Akiko runs down the hill yelling, "The war is over. You don't have to die, and we can all go home." Unfortunately, she is shot dead by a Japanese officer at the doorway to a new life. Heart-broken and burning with anger, Yang and Naja rush to the Japanese camp in an armored vehicle to take revenge for her sake.

Maeda Tomoe, the nineteen-year-old Japanese girl who plays Akiko, told the reporters that "she had come to know the historical facts and would tell her relatives and friends about the

truth, and so help maintain friendly Sino-Japanese relations."[21] Her words echo those of Akiko's: "They told us to kill the Chinese, the Americans, and all others, but now all these people are killing the Japanese. [...] I cannot kill you, because you are good people." The film's last scene is the symbolic portrayal of the "farewell to arms," revealing the silhouette of people throwing away their weapons in the background of a huge setting sun that occupies the entire screen. What follows is a list of the casualties in World War II: among the total of 74 million, 35 million are from China and 20 million from the former Soviet Union.

The long failure to receive a proper apology from Japan is partly why the Chinese are still making films about the Sino-Japanese War in 2001, and why Chinese audiences never rushed to see Duan Jishun and Junya Sato's *The Go Master* (1982) or Xie Jin's *The Bell of Purity Temple* (1991), both depicting the friendship of Chinese and Japanese people and well received in Japan. Feng Xiaoning said, "*Purple Sun* was shot to remind people of history and to foil the attempts by Japanese right-wing forces to distort and cover up the truth of history" (Xinhua News). Feng is not the only director who represents the Sino-Japanese war as a part of "the humanistic, democratic, and civilized alliance winning over an inhuman, autocratic, and Fascist campaign," while carrying forward a "nationalism sharing the democratic values of internationalism" (Geng Chuanming 73). An early film, China's 1997 contender for an Oscar and the biggest box office hit, is so far the most unexpected film of Chinese film history: Ye Daying's *Red Cherry* (1995). The film is dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the Anti-Fascist victory. Considering that *Red Cherry* not only is set in Russia, but also has most of its conversations in Russian and German, which means that most Chinese audiences have to read the subtitles, its box office record is really a miracle.[22]

Red Cherry focuses on Chuchu and Luo Xiaoman, two Chinese orphans about thirteen years old, whose Communist parents were executed by the Nationalists. The two are sent to the Ivanov International Academy in Moscow for sanctuary in the winter of 1940, only to be separated by the German invasion after a short period of worry free life in the boarding school. The girls go to what is now Belarus, while the boys are forced to stay behind. Chuchu winds up as a maidservant in an echo-filled monastery occupied by a Nazi general and his obedient staff. As Peter Stack observes,

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[21] Quoted in "Film on Nanjing Massacre Premieres" by Xinhua News Agency, *China Daily*, April 30 (2001). http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cover/storydb/2001/04/29/cn-film.429.html

[22] What makes this case truly unique is that most imported film from foreign countries shown in theatres are dubbed. Instead of having a "best foreign picture award," the Chinese film authority has a "best dubbed film award."

> The general, a wealthy physician before the war, is also a frustrated artist. Fascinated by Chuchu's exotic looks [and especially her silky skin], he wants to bend her to his will. When she resists, he has her bound and anesthetized so he can create an elaborate tattoo on her back. The ornate work takes many sessions to complete. Chuchu is unable to see that the tattoo's centerpiece is a Nazi swastika. (D3)

The German soldiers try to tell Chuchu how lucky she is to be part of their general's "art," but she finds it such a shame that when she has a chance, she rubs her back and even burns it in an attempt to remove the tattoo.

Meanwhile, Luo Xiaoman, who becomes a street ragamuffin, tries every means to help in fighting the Germans. After being rejected by the army registry, he is turned away from the hospital for a blood donation, all because he is underage. Then he becomes an assistant in a post office, but he cannot bear mothers' crying caused by his delivery. One day, there is no response to his mail—he finds that the mother has already starved to death, while her little girl Kaja thinks that she is asleep. Sharing his bread with Kaja and keeping her company, the little girl starts to call him papa, telling others, "My papa is Chinese, and I am Chinese too." They find a spot in an empty bell tower, from where they can shoot the German captives laboring in the camp with a catapult. The Germans get irritated and eventually find him and chase him to the very top of the tower. Instead of begging for his life or waiting for the Russians to help, our young hero sets the tower on fire and dies with the enemy.

Dumped by the Germans on their escape route, the half-dead Chuchu is picked up by the Russians. When she refuses to take a shower with other girls, they find the tattoo in her back. The Soviet government decides to replace the skin on her back so they can have the tattooed skin displayed in their war museum. In the end, the operation cannot take place due to the high risk because of the size of skin. We are told at the end that the real life Chuchu lived her entire life unmarried.

"With imagery that is both terrifying and sublime and a narrative that assaults like blitzkrieg and liners with poetic detachment," *The Boston Phoenix* comments, "*Red Cherry* enters the ranks of atrocity art alongside *Schindler's List*." What really attracted the Chinese audiences to the film is not just its Anti-Fascist theme or the violently exotic story. The real reason, as director Ye Daying already thought about before making the film, is the "Russia complex" of many Chinese.

There are many flaws with Feng Xiaoning's trilogy, and *Red Cherry*'s treatment of the Germans is pretty cartoonish, but these films' representations of the heroism of ordinary people, and even children, come at the right moments to win the sympathy of audiences. While Feng Xiao weaves elements of commercial films with Hollywood traits, Ye Daying picks an

unexplored approach that proved to be successful. By getting foreigners into the picture, and having them narrate Chinese stories, both directors reveal an intention to transform the long-lived nationalism into a sur-nationalism that may possibly bridge the gap between nationalism and internationalism, an issue that every national cinema has to deal with.

Another case that supports the above argument is a 1996 documentary on the Korean War (of the early 1950s) that became a box office hit. Chinese people are familiar with such films as Sha Meng and Lin Shan *Shanggan Ridges* (1956) that focus on the heroes of the Chinese Volunteers' Army who helped the Koreans to fight the Americans (or more precisely, the UN Army). The Chinese all know that Mao Zedong sent his eldest son, Mao Anying, to Korea where he died with over a million other Chinese soldiers. No one expected that, more than half a century later, a documentary on the Korean War that includes footage from newsreels and interviews with the survivors of former Chinese Volunteers' Army, would became a surprise in 1996's Chinese film market: *Measure of Strength* directed by Wang Jinduo. Zhang Yiwu attributes the film's success to its "panoramic narrative of a collective heroism of the Chinese" while facing a severe historical challenge.

> The film has attracted [Chinese] audiences because it reveals "measure of strength" not only in battlefields but also at the ideological level. It affirms the Chinese's righteousness in the confrontation. After the Cold War, the film provides the Chinese people another chance to reflect on their present situation: yesterday's trials of strength was for the nation's survival, while today's battles concern the nation's development, which is a longer, more difficult and complicated task. ("Understanding" 7)

August First Film Studio sold the film's copyright cheaply to distributors and thus did not earn much from it (Gao Jun and Zhang Shuyu 15). It was a good lesson for the State-owned Studio (which is one of the two left in China) and sent a message to all filmmakers about how much nationalist sentiment may affect the market. Although the success of *Measure of Strength* seems to be one of a kind, it is really one of many examples that prove the universal truth about nationalism and cinema.[23]

3. China as Third World, or Local as Global?

Around the time when *Red Sorghum* came out, the debates and practices in the name of film innovation took a new turn. A group of directors from both the fifth and forth generations started to lay their "introspective eye" on the "human psyche in a specific cultural atmosphere,"

and the result was "the birth of the cultural film" (Li Suyuan, "Culture" 58). The shift from the term "nation" to that of "culture," in the criticism around the turn of the 1990s, can be understood as an attempt to present something Chinese but not as politically burdened as previous films, which in fact parallels the replacement of patriotism with humanitarianism.

Both generations see the necessity of a "cultural introspection" through film, but all cultural films "are less profound and captivating when depicting the new cultural psychology than in illustrating the old state of mind. In part this is because life itself has not provided artistic creation with enough raw materials" (60). When reflecting the past, the Fourth Generation tries to criticize the deeper roots of the repressive tradition, while the Fifth Generation takes up a more flamboyant way of presentation by involving imagined rituals that bear the clear mark of "Chineseness" to both foreign critics and audiences.

Taking into consideration how eager the Chinese wanted to "walk toward the world" in the 1980s, no one expected that the Golden Bear would annoy so many Chinese people who felt that the award "brought us shame, not glory" (Chen Haosu 273). Chen Haosu, a minister in charge of film, first had to clarify the rumor that a different version was sent to Berlinale, and second, address whether the film actually "insulted China by presenting the poverty and backwardness" of its past (273-75). China-based scholars divided into two extremes: those who praised the film for its cultural value (Chen Xiaoxin 29-35), and those who despised the film for its lack of culture (He Shaojun and Pan Kaixiong, "Fifth Generation" 9-14).

With Edward Said's definition of the Orient, as "a European invention, and since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (1), overseas Chinese scholars translated negative reactions against an auto-Orientalism "selling oriental exoticism to a Western audience" (Chow, *Primitive Passion* 176). Such a preoccupation then became the point of departure for many articles, whose authors forgot the reason why fifth-generation directors intend to "search for national roots" through an "ideology of the body" (Zhang Yingjin, "Ideology" 46) or "primitive passion" (Rey Chow).

In the overseas edition of *People's Daily* (of March 14, 1988), Zhang Yimou said: "film is a more convenient medium than the novel that we can use to disseminate our national spirit and cultural consciousness. We absolutely should give a punch outside [China]" (Chen Xiaoxin 29). In *Red Sorghum*, Zhang Yimou constructs a primitive society with people who would do anything to free themselves from any kind of repression, be it sexual, patriarchal, or, Japanese (Zhang Yimou, "Praise" 2). And his "imagined community"—to borrow the term from Benedict

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[23] Dai Jinhua mentions this documentary as an example of nationalist work alongside *China Can Say No* in 1996 ("Behind" 161).

Anderson that I find very relevant here—is built to contradict the present, just as the way he and other Youth Crew members made *One and Eight*.

The obvious sense of discontinuity or the sharp emotional turn between the first and second halves of the film—with a very brief announcement by the narrator, "The Japanese suddenly came"—was shocking to many around 1988 (Lu Yinghong 69). This kind of narrative structure that suddenly turns the characters' fate downhill, like the sudden loss of paradise, has been adapted by many later films exactly for the shocking effect.[24]. The protagonists, who are once anti-heroes and not really exemplary citizens by Confucian standards, suddenly have a chance to fight the Japanese and become national heroes.

What holds the two parts of the narrative in *Red Sorghum*, and many other films, together is a set of rituals and folk customs with which the Fifth Generation carries forward a "cultural nationalism." I understand this term through a comment made by the fifth-generation cameraman Xiao Feng about his peers: "Even when learning something from the West, they have to make it appear Chinese; in fact, not just Chinese, it should appear like their own" (Bai Xiaoding 35).

The fifth-generation rituals are not those conventional rituals, which have been an important element from the beginning of Chinese film history. Scholars of early films tell us that,

> China's first short feature made by Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Zhengqiu was *Troubled Couple* (1913). The film depicts the unnecessary and over-elaborate formalities of a traditional arranged marriage: from the match-maker's initial proposal, to eventually putting the new couple, who do not know each other, into the wedding bedroom. (Hong Shi et al. 25)

As progressive young men despising feudal ideas, the two filmmakers intended to ridicule arranged marriages as an old and corrupt custom. Since then, their cinematic presentation of traditional rituals and folk customs has been continued for various purposes—sometimes for creating atmosphere, sometimes for transcending narratives.

The Fifth Generation, however, use rituals and folk customs to an extent that no other generation ever thought of. The wedding sequences in *Yellow Earth* and the Tibetan pilgrims in *Horse Thief* are presented in a very realistic way. Finding exoticism in these cultural landscapes that are distanced from the majority of Chinese people in terms of both geography and history—at least the sense of it—the filmmakers' impulse was to document the landscapes in a natural light and the way they were. In the making of *Red Sorghum*, imagination came into the play due to the lack of visual evidence of rituals and folk customs that survive only in legends, such as the sedan

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[24] Joan Chen's *Xiu Xiu*, which we will discuss in the next chapter, as well as Feng Xiaoning's *Red River Valley*, are among recent examples.

bouncing and the making of sorghum wine.[25] Therefore, the filmmakers create them. As Zhou Baozheng points out, "these may be imagined 'customs', but Zhang Yimou's invented ritualized customs seem surprisingly real and believable, [...] since they are designed according to his perception of Chinese tradition" (Zhou Baozheng 118).

In *Ju Dou*, the imagined customs include the daily practice in a dye mill. David Chute says that "Westerners may assume that [*Ju Dou*'s] backbreaking hand-operated textile plant is an authentic Old Chinese design. Zhang says no. He chose the setting, then designed and built it from scratch" ("Golden Hours" 65). In *Raise the Red Lanterns*, the foot massage and lantern raising are also daily rituals announcing which woman is chosen for the night; and no one can afford to be indifferent to the "ancestor's rules" since it is practically a matter of life and death.

While Zhang Yimou continued his ritual practice, his peers also produced a repertoire of works combining traditional rituals/customs with imagined ones, which function not only as visual spectaculars, but also as a narrative drive and an evaluation process. In He Ping's *Red Firecrackers, Green Firecrackers*, for instance, when Chunzhi, the female "young master" running a fireworks plant, chooses a man that her extended family cannot accept, another man is called in for a fireworks contest to decide who is best for her and the clan. Since regional cultures in China are as diverse as its dialects, even Chinese audiences cannot reject such imagined rituals as "fake" with confidence.

Through an eloquent rhetoric of ritual—with "its intrinsic ambiguity, its unspokenness, [and] its persuasivenss" (Sutton 41), which, in Zhang Yimou films, is not only a "repetitive, formalized activity set off from day-to-day life" (31), but also a daily practice and a ubiquitous presence—a possible history or a believable past is constructed. In both processes of creating the imagined ritual and making the film, a "cultural nationalism" is woven into the film narrative through a symbolic "return to tradition" (Chen Xiaoming, "Return" 69), which is not only a parade of Chinese cultural spectacles, but also a rejection of Western interpretations.

Whether the imagined ritual is really *Chinese*, or whether it can represent the true national spirit, are not exactly questions that would concern foreign film festival judges. What they hope for, as Bill Nichols points out in his article "Discovering Form, Inferring Meaning," is an "encounter with the unfamiliar, the experience of something strange, the discovery of new voices and visions [that] serve as a major incitement."

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[25] Zhang Yimou mentions that he consulted Mo Yan about the details of wine making. Mo Yan said that his knowledge also came from books. Since no one actually saw the old way of wine making, Mo Yan suggests to him: "As long as you make the audiences believe that you guys are making wine instead of soy sauce, the goal is achieved" (Zhang Yimou, "Praise" 6).

> There is a reverie in the fascination with the strange, an abiding pleasure in the recognition of differences that persists beyond the moment. Even though festival-goers receive encouragement to make the strange familiar, to recover difference as similarity, another form of pleasure resides in the experience of strangeness itself. [...] Recovering the strange as familiar takes two forms: first, acknowledgment of an international film style, and second, the retrieval of insights or lessons about a different culture (often recuperated yet further by the simultaneous discovery of an underlying, cross-cultural humanity). As the most experienced festival-goers, festival judges have no difficulty in discovering the form and inferring the meaning, which were two processes that define the act of making sense from new experience. (17-18)

The realization of the above rules of the games has prevented many China-based scholars from being too serious about festival judges and their prejudices, but the competition in offering authoritative interpretations of fifth-generation texts is not over.

Even in a case like *Ju Dou*, whose main theme of self-liberation has been recognized by scholars from all the three parties (Callahan, "Gender" 56), not all scholars appreciate the story in the same way. People who are serious about China's image feel "an embarrassment," since Zhang Yimou "relates a woman's tragic fate to her sexual frustrations and calls for the basic respect and concern for a human being from there" (Liu Xufeng 36). What I mean by "people" here refers to both mainland officials and ordinary Chinese, and probably also includes Hong Kong Chinese viewers who felt an "uneasiness" (Lau, "*Judou*—A Hermeneutical Reading" 2).

The rumor was that *Ju Dou* was banned due to its sexual content, but "a close study [would] reveal that neither the level of nudity nor the explicitness of sexual acts in the film was unprecedented on Chinese screens" (3). The exposing of a Chinese woman's body and sexual desires in a story about patricide set in a repressive Confucian society is really a narrative inviting all kinds of interpretations, including those applying theories of Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and feminism among others.

One theory that has elicited many responses among China-based scholars is Fredric Jameson's theory on Third World texts as national allegories:

> Third World texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic, necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public Third Word culture and society. (142)

Probably because Mao Zedong's notion of the three worlds laid a good foundation in the mind of many Chinese who learned about it in school, scholars with a mainland education of secondary and higher relate to the term "Third World" with more ease than "the Orient."

Many scholars point out that China's cultural heroes, Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou, have taken a stand "between the First World and the Third World, showing their fellow country men their form of existence, while revealing to the West the secrets of 'the other.' And, this strategy is not bad at all: it is like using one stone to kill two birds" (Zhang Yiwu and Meng Fanhua 3). Wang Yichuan goes so far as to regard

> Zhang Yimou's text as a Chinese parable written under the guidance of the Western Other and corresponds to the Western strategy of [cultural] assimilation. This parable is not one of the Chinese nation, but rather one designed by Western authority. Thus the so-called *nationalization* is an illusion. [...] To see him as a constructor of Chinese nationality is also an illusion. ("Myth" 83)

Some critics see Chinese film culture as a kind of discourse that should be discussed in the context of "Imperialism and Socialism, the First World and the Third World, the bourgeoisie and the proletarian" (Yao Xiaomeng 4), and others maintain that "as a marginal discourse from the Third World, Chinese culture in general is under the domination of Western discourse. In such a context, Zhang Yimou's "art films" become nothing but Chinese commodity cultural products that best satisfy the Western desire and imagination of the Third World" (Liu Xufeng 37). In short, even though the awareness of the Western cultural hegemony has been increased with various kinds of nationalist sentiment around them, China-based scholars now accept the proposal of Third World culture as an opportunity for them to open up the studies of national culture or "native culture." When used well, as veteran scholar Yue Daiyun suggests, this may well be a chance for Chinese scholars to redefine the meaning of Third World texts (Yue Daiyun 31).

At the turn of the twenty-first century, transnational Chinese cinema has become not only an important part of world cinema, but also a trend-setter with figures such as Zhang Yimou, Hou Hsiao-hsien and Wong Kar-wai. Many mainlanders first understood the slogan "the most national *is* the most international" through Zhang Yimou films (Li Luxiang 106). Nowadays, as a third-generation director Xie Tieli observes, "the local as the global" is not merely a theoretical topic, but an issue that every filmmaker has to face (Xie Tieli 6). The veteran director quotes a foreign scholar who has told some Chinese writers that he does not like the slogan "Chinese literature walking towards the world": "The 'towards' in this slogan implies a loss of 'self.' You only have to 'face' the world, but your feet should stand on your own ground" (7). Although the Chinese never meant to really leave their own ground, they have been facing the world.

After the trans-Pacific roar about *Ju Dou*, Chinese filmmakers have never stopped learning about the art of compromise, not to the West, but to the censor. "Westerners do worry a

lot about the government," as Chute finds, "partly because it's the only element of Chinese life we read about in the papers" ("Golden Hours" 66). Zhang Yimou often tells foreign reporters that

> every director in China has a kind of censor inside his mind: even those independent filmmakers who claim they only tell stories they want to tell. If you are to live and work in China, automatically you have that self-censorship, even before you choose a subject or write a script. If someone says, "I don't care about the government, I just do what I want," this is not true. In order to survive, the best we can do is try to preserve as much of ourselves as we can, however little that may be, in our work. (Andrews)

Even after passing the mid-production and post-production checks, a Chinese director had better make sure that his or her film does not go to a festival without Beijing's approval. Even though a foreign investor may be entitled to the right of international release and distribution, when the government is angry, the filmmaker may be deprived of the right to make films at all. As Zhang Yimou explains further, "Chinese films are not like Western films. They are neither commodity nor a work of art—they belong in the realm of 'ideology.' That is why they are guarded so heavily—they know that film is a powerful medium for influencing thought" (Mayfair Yang 307). This is indeed very true, but from how much the Fifth Generation has changed Chinese film culture, we know that China is still their nation, their ground for future growth.

In this chapter, my discussion on revolution/war films could not possibly avoid the issue of history writing. I choose to deal here with some Wu Ziniu's war films and Feng Xiaoning's war trilogy because these films emphasize more on the nationalist aspects than the historical ones. As for Ye Daying's making of *Red Cherry*, I think history is a significant issue side by side with its anti-Fascist theme. That is why I will further discuss the film and the director's next feature, *Red Lovers*, in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 "History" Versus Its Film Versions

Ever since the Chinese began making films nearly a century ago, history has always been an inexhaustible source of inspiration. In *Ci Hai* or *Ocean of Words: Chinese Lexicography* (1980) an authentic Chinese lexicography, history in the broad sense is defined as the "developing process of all things," although usually it only refers to the "developing process of human society" (146). Considered as a mirror (*jian*) that may reflect the past, in China just as in other countries, "history is the most important pedagogic technology of identity formation" (Duara 107) as well as a "philosophy teaching by example" (Macauley 72). When history is represented in films, the teaching can be done through films, and thus even historical films can never be "representations" of history in a strict sense. In China, since film is a state-controlled medium, it is even more so.

Historical films in Chinese cinema basically fall into three categories: ancient-costume drama set in Imperial China, films on modern Chinese history (before 1949), and films on contemporary Chinese history (up to the end of the Cultural Revolution). Mainland directors used to have the reputation of preserving the historicity to a much larger degree in ancient-costume films than filmmakers from elsewhere. The rich archaeological findings, the accessibility to historical sites, the long emphasis on in-depth historical studies, and audiences' great interest in historical subjects have enabled them to stick to the "orthodox history" at the cost of free creations. Although the trend of *xishuo* (dramatic-telling)—popular in both Hong Kong and Taiwan—began to influence mainland ancient-costume drama series from the 1980s, most mainland filmmakers have avoided ridiculing or romanticizing history to the *xishuo* extent. This is partially why both Zhou Xiaowen's *The Emperor's Shadow* (1996) and Chen Kaige's *The Emperor and the Assassin* (1998),[1] two fifth-generation films that reinvent stories of the First Emperor of China, have received much more criticism than praise.

The second category of historical films reflecting upon modern Chinese history are mostly revolution/war films discussed in the last chapter. The overlapping of the two concepts here is due to the fact that modern Chinese history is filled with events from the old democratic revolution to the new, from the first civil war to the second, from the social reforms to the cultural ones. The master of this film genre is Xie Jin, who has been consciously putting together a modern Chinese history in film through a body of works, each covering a different period and

[1] The film was shot in the formerly sleepy market town of Hengdian in Dongyang county, Zhejiang province. In the latter half of 1998, Hengdian Group started to build the town into a movie production center. Beginning with a mock-up of 19th-century Guangzhou (which is still standing and known as Guangzhou Street) for Xie Jin's *The Opium War* (1997), Hengdian had several other sets (Cooper 14-16).

some major historical events during the period (Li Yiming, "Xie Jin" 8). In his films that depict how the Communist party saved both China and Chinese people from misery, the interest of the people is never in conflict with that of the nation, the country, the Communist party, and the government under its leadership. Such history writing, including both the conflict-resolution mode and the double foculization of "now" and "then," has been updated by Feng Xiaoning's war trilogy, examined earlier, and shifted by some recent works—notably Ye Daying's *A Time to Remember* (1998).

The third category of historical films, namely, films on the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), became a historical subject in Chinese film shortly after the political frenzy was ended. Directors from the third generation and onward have all depicted the surreal decade of political frenzy. It was the memory of the Cultural Revolution, which accompanied fifth-generation members coming-of-age, that made them a group of cultural rebels, and their films a collective narrative of powerless individuals under the giant wheel of history. As I will argue, they have completed the first step in departing from the monolithic "people's account" of the revolution's history, and history in general, by posing themselves—a generation falling victim to a historical error and sharing experiences as Red Guards and sent-down youths—as a unique voice in history writing. The more radical step has been taken by younger directors, for whom the Cultural Revolution is a more distanced and vague memory, which, in the case of Jiang Wen's *In the Heat of the Sun* (1995), is constructed as a more personal account challenging all previous representations.

In the vein of "personal history writing," female directors have also made their own contributions by bringing the gender issue into the picture. Fourth-generation director Zhang Nuanxin's *Sacrificed Youth* (1986) depicts a sent-down girl's experience in the Dai minority region where feminine beauty has always been cherished and valued. Focusing on such a discovery, which provides another value system, the Cultural Revolution was depicted as a time when women were deprived of the right to be beautiful since they had to dress and act like men to be politically progressive. Since many articles have already been written about this film, I will explore two less-discussed works by female directors, Li Shaohong's *Blush* (1995) and Joan Chen's *Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl* (1998), as writings of "her stories."

Before going into case studies, we should keep in mind the issues that China-based scholars have been discussing. Just as Chris Berry found the term *national film* "applied automatically to all esteemed works," etc. I found the word *history* employed in a similar way in film criticism. In the critical writings of a prominent scholar like Dai Jinhua, for instance, the word "history" is used or added whenever a heavier word than writing, memory, narration, tradition, and culture is needed. Her famous collaboration with Meng Yue titled *Emerging from*

the Horizon of History (1988), a book on writings of, and by, women, has been regarded as one of the first feminist declarations in China. In *Landscape in the Mist*, Dai Jinhua calls the Fifth Generation "the son of history" (261), and the Zhang Yimou myth a "historical spectacle" (246). In writings by other scholars as well, the meaning of "history" (not like "literariness" or "film nationalization") has been left undefined; thus, in different contexts, *history* may refer to civilization, nation, tradition, historicity, historiography, and recently, ethnography.

Influenced by Michel Foucault's idea that in a historical narrative, what matters is the time history is narrated rather than the time of history itself (Liu Hong 69), China-based critic-scholars have reexamined the overemphasis on historicity in films:

> What makes us focus and reflect upon this topic is the long *misunderstanding* of "history" in our cinematic creation. For many years, "respecting history," "representing history," and "historical truth" have been our preoccupation with, and aesthetic goals of, historical films. In the 1990s, the trend of "rewriting history" finally has started challenging the deep-rooted view on history, causing oral and literary debates among artists, as well as between artists and historians. (Chen Xiaoyun and Chen Yuxin 223)

I think the word "misunderstanding" means "narrow understanding." Since "history" had been a word carrying much weight before the 1990s, a scholar would not quote Roland Barthes and call history a production of ideology or imagination even though s/he believed so (Liu Hong 69).[2] Most Chinese historians, like their foreign counterparts, still maintain that historiography should somehow take "an antitheoretical stance" (Duara 105), or at least, not allow a certain theory to qualify its scope—be it postmodern, poststructuralist, or postcolonial (Esherick 155; Woodside 126-8).

The rise of popular culture and mass media in Mainland China is one of the major factors that has pushed history writing in the direction of popularization. Around the same time when entertainment film was put on the agenda of Chinese cinema, one extra force that literally came from outside into China was the impact of Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* (1988), a historical film about China that attracted the attention of the world.[3] Chinese audiences found the film very interesting and very different from their impressions of earlier Chinese historical films which often attempted to teach a moral lesson (Liu Hong 69-70). Both Chinese critics and audiences were astonished by imagined details about the emperor's life in Bertolucci's film: many were dumbstruck on seeing the empress cover the young emperor's face with lipstick kiss

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[2] See also Shi Bei, "Two Meanings of History in Film Criticism."

[3] When the four months shooting was done in Beijing in 1987, producer Jeremy Thomas had "nothing but praise for his Chinese hosts in the Co-production Corporation" (Rayns, "Bertolucci" 39), not realizing that he was indeed lucky to have had the work scheduled in a relatively open period.

marks, and both the empress and the second consort fleeing into the emperor's bed on a stormy night. Chinese filmmakers thought: "So, history can be done this way!" The nine Oscar awards the film received affirmed their discovery.

Mainland directors will probably never ridicule "orthodox history" and especially historical figures the way Hong Kong historical drama often does. The popular nature of film decides that historical films are, to a large extent, about departing from conventional historiography rather than representing it. In recent works by fifth and younger generations, the actual history is put into the background while the fate of individuals is brought to the foreground; meanwhile, the line between collective and personal memories is blurred. In a sense, most controversial Chinese films produced during the 1990s can be analyzed in light of history writing, but what I will concentrate on here are works dealing with "time-specific" history—not timeless allegories without clearly marked historical contexts—that have received critiques on their constructions of history.

1 The Emperor and His Women: Popularizing History

Fifth-generation directors have made two big-budget, ancient-costume films—*The Emperor's Shadow* (1996) by Zhou Xiaowen and *The Emperor and the Assassin* (1998) by Chen Kaige,[4] both about Ying Zheng, the First Emperor of China who died 2200 years ago. There were numerous emperors and kings in Chinese history, yet both directors chose to tell the story of Ying Zheng. Was it because of his incomparable achievements, including the construction of the Great Wall and unification of China, or his outrageous cruelty, revealed in the "book-burning and intellectual-killing" event, let alone the fifteen years of warfare?[5] It seems that there were more reasons than these "facts" with which most Chinese audiences were already familiar.

Instead of evaluating Ying Zheng's position in Chinese history, both *The Emperor's Shadow* and *The Emperor and the Assassin* are stories about ultimate power and violence, configuring the First Emperor as a lonely winner who paid dearly for his dream: the hearts and lives of his beloved. Although using the past to disparage the present has been a tradition in writings about history, accompanied by an equally long history of literary inquisition, both Zhou Xiaowen and Chen Kaige are more interested in the interrogation of human nature than history

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[4] Zhou Xiaowen's film cost 40 million RMB (or more than 4.8 million USD) and was the most expensive film ever made in China until Chen Kaige's film doubled its cost.

[5] Tang Dynasty and Qing Dynasty are two favorite periods of both audiences and film/TV drama producers. Tang was an open and prosperous era of the Imperial China (618-907), with numerous stories of lust, love,

itself. Thus, unlike those historical films that attempt a balance between the will to attain historicity and the urge to enforce ideologies, both directors began their "historical projects" with the belief that "history cannot be restored" just as "one cannot step into a river twice" (Chen Xiaoyun and Chen Yuxin 224).

As the first director to claim that he cannot be responsible for history because history does not pay for admissions (Chai Xiaofeng 329), Zhou Xiaowen caused a fuss among many, just as Tian Zhuangzhuang once did for telling reporters that his films "were shot for audiences of the next century" (qtd. in Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 47). These two declarations, with nearly a decade in between, have said much about the Fifth Generation's turning from elite-culture artists to popular-culture leaders.

Zhou Xiaowen's approach to history is similar to that of Bertolucci, who studied the history so that he would know every change was out of choice and not ignorance (Rayns, "Bertolucci" 39). The director did his homework by reading authoritative histories such as Sima Qian's *Record of the Historian*, but the result of this research was his disbelief in history "since it has too many versions."[6] To him, *Record of the Historian* was just another "story-book" so he was under no pressure to be "faithful" to it (Chai Xiaofeng 328). When asked about his reason to choose a historical subject, Zhou Xiaowen said, "only in a story about the ancient time can we present an emperor and a slave at the same time; it is not possible for us to do so in a contemporary story. When the status difference between two men is stretched to an extreme, their friendship and competition become very intense and interesting" (329). Since Zhou Xiaowen's goal was to attract a great number of audiences, the pressure for him was how to make the film interesting to watch. In terms of commercial success, Zhou Xiaowen has been the only fifth-generation director who can compete with Zhang Yimou, and he always thought it possible to make entertainment films with an art-house quality.

As the "philosopher-poet" of the Fifth Generation, Chen Kaige has been less concerned with audiences than his peers have been, and almost all his works, except for *Farewell, My Concubine* (1993), have been box-office flops. He always claims he does not "just make films" since he has a "cultural mission" (Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 465), and thus his films are not made to be watched only once. (I have always appreciated a Chen Kaige film much more the second time I watched it, but how many others would do the same if they did not enjoy watching it the first time?) He has never stopped his philosophical quest concerning power, gender, life and death, as

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and power struggles. Qing spanned more than 400 years when China was ruled by the Manchu, defeated in the Opium War, and insulted by a number of unequal treaties.

[6] This English title is Burton Watson's translation. See also Raymond Dawson's more recent translation titled *Historical Records* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994).

well as the relationship between man and nature; thus in his films, history and allegory are equally turned into philosophical interrogation. In the making of *The Emperor and the Assassin*, Chen Kaige employed traits such as grand spectacles of warfare and dazzling choreography of sword fights. He invited China's most popular actors and comedians to play leading and supporting roles, apparently for commercial reasons, but the film still turned out to be a "Titanic" disaster for its investors, reportedly from four countries (465-66). Boston critic Paul Sherman calls *The Emperor and the Assassin* a film that "out-Bards the Bard" (S13), but a Shakespearean type of film cannot attract a large audience in China. My following discussion will focus on approaches both films used in reconstructing history: the modern psychological study of men in history, and the creative configurations of women who did not make (it into) history.

1.1 The Man Who Is History

The stories of *The Emperor's Shadow* and *The Emperor and the Assassin* are mostly fictional without contradicting the well-known "facts" about Ying Zheng: he was held as a hostage in the Zhao Kingdom as a boy, survived many assassination attempts, united the territory, and unified the currency and written language (characters) of China. Names of male characters in both films can be found in the *Record of the Historian* and other history books, though the relationships among them in the films were not necessarily the same as in "history." *The Emperor's Shadow* depicts the friendship and competition between Ying Zheng and Gao Jianli—two childhood "brothers" growing up to be a king and a slave; *The Emperor and the Assassin* brings together the life stories of Ying Zheng and Jing Ke—probably the most famous king and assassin in Chinese history. *Records of the Historian* described Gao Jianli as a friend of Jing Ke, who played music for the latter when he left for the great but deadly mission. After Jing Ke failed, Gao Jianli made another attempt to kill Ying Zheng and was killed. In Zhou Xiaowen's film, Jing Ke appears only briefly; in Chen Kaige's film, Gao Jianli does not appear at all.

The Emperor's Shadow begins with the aged Ying Zheng coming to attend a rite over the Yellow River and ordering soldiers to throw musical instruments into the river as an unusual sacrificial offering. The narrative then goes back many years before when Gao Jianli's mother, a Zhao woman, is breastfeeding both baby Ying Zheng and her son. The two boys grow into boyhood like brothers. One day, an executioner receives the order to execute all hostages from Qin Kingdom, including Prince Ying Zheng. Seeing how scared he is, Gao asks him to close his eyes and he plays the zither and sings a folk song about two dogs. The executioner changes his mind at the last minute and leaves Ying alive, but Ying cannot forget the horror of hearing heads

being chopped off. Before long, Ying is taken back to his country. He tries to bring his little brother Gao with him but fails. The initial setup proves to be the key to understanding the psychology of our protagonists.

Twenty-six years pass and Ying Zheng has become the awesome King of Qin, who has conquered three kingdoms and is planning to take over the other three—Zhao, Yan and Qi. Gao Jianli has become the most famous musician of the time and a master of the zither. While sending his army to conquer the Zhao, Ying instructs Wang Ben, the son of his highest general Wang Jian, to bring Gao back to compose the "Ode to Qin" (*Qin Song*), which is the Chinese title of the film. Gao curses Ying all the way to the Qin Kingdom, witnessing the mass killings done by Qin's army. When seeing some eunuchs carrying a crippled beautiful woman, who seems amazed by the number of prisoners, he calls her a whore. For that, Wang Ben brands the character "prisoner" on Gao's forehead—a common practice at the time—in anger, since the woman is the king's beloved daughter, Princess Yueyang, who is engaged to Wang Ben.

From the moment Ying and Gao meet, history becomes the background, and the story about the two men begins to unfold. Ying is first irritated to see the iron mark on Gao's face, but then he says that if Qin loses the battle, the same would happen to him. He wants to treat Gao like a brother, but Gao has no intention to suit a tyrant: after lots of cursing and a failed attempt to attack Ying, he goes on a hunger strike for several days, before Yueyang manages to feed him back to life. Yueyang has also failed in many attempts to feed him, but when she suddenly starts singing the two-dog song, Gao stops his resistance. Apparently, Ying still remembers the childhood friendship (Chai Xiaofeng 342). When Gao regains his health and comes to visit Yueyang, he demands two things at once: her virginity and a death sentence from Ying. Surprisingly, Yueyang embraces Gao and as a result of their lovemaking, her legs are miraculously cured. The two become secret lovers when they realize that they both are like chessman on the king's chessboard: Gao is to complete the "Ode to Qin," and Yueyang is to be married to Wang Ben, the son of Ying Zheng's most prominent general. Yueyang presses Gao to accept her father's assignment on the condition that he marries her. When Gao comes to Ying, Qin's army is killing "rebels" among the prisoners. In order to plead for their lives, Gao says: "I agree to compose the "Ode to Qin" and to be your Court Composer. I accept your marrying Yueyang to Wang Ben, only if you stop killing." Touched by Gao's sincerity, Ying stops the mass killing, though not for long.

There is not really much a "prisoner" like Gao can use to negotiate with a king. Ying Zheng soon finds out what has happened behind his back. When his officials suggest that Gao should be executed for raping the princess, Ying replies that he cannot, since, actually, the princess raped

Gao. When Wang Ben wants to reject Yueyang for the same reason, Ying tells him that he should feel lucky since Yueyang is now cured. Ying's reasoning here has irritated many Chinese scholars, who did not find this comic and called it a "hooligan's logic" or a "punk" philosophy (Wang Zhimin 67; Wang Dehou 65). To me, Ying Zheng is not really defending Gao Jianli here, as Wang Dehou suggests (64): he is defending his dignity by winning over everyone at every moment. He soon punishes the lovers by having Gao blinded and Yueyang married off. He spares Gao from execution for several crimes since he needs the latter's music to keep his fears away. Gao attempts to smash his zither on Ying Zheng's head at the emperor's coronation saying, "History will tell people that a man called Gao Jianli attacked the First Emperor when he ascended the throne." "Wrong," Ying Zheng replies, "since history will be written by me. And I will let Gao Jianli live, since he is Ying Zheng's shadow." At this moment, we see blood coming out of Gao's mouth as he already took some poison. Later, Ying learns that Yueyang had killed herself on her wedding night.

Having united China, Ying Zheng finally realizes his dream and becomes the First Emperor. He has the ultimate power to kill millions; however, as Zhou Xiaowen argues, Ying Zheng simply cannot keep one man, who is also a friend of his, alive (Chai Xiaofeng 331). The film depicts him as a very lonely winner who loses spiritually, and Gao as a loser who wins spiritually. When he makes offerings for the Heaven on a high altar, Ying Zheng cries when the "Ode to Qin" is being performed: his face seems to tell us that loneliness always comes from the will to rule the soul of others (333). In the film, Ying Zheng mentions three times that the four fundamental elements of the world are Heaven, Earth, Man and God, and he is all four combined. As he announced to Yueyang and others, "I am the law." Does he remind the Chinese of other historical figures?

The film does create an ancient atmosphere through its artistic design, which includes the using of limited colors ranging from black to beige (340). The music is also simple but with an ancient feel. With different lyrics played on different instruments, variations of the two-dog song include both a work song sung to synchronized movements when slaves are building an altar for Ying Zheng, and then its transformation into the "Ode to Qin." It is ironic that the "Ode to Qin" is based on a folk song from a kingdom destroyed by Qin (341-43). Critics can despise *The Emperor's Shadow* as merely a film with "history packing" (Wang Dehou 66), but large audiences paid admission to see it, and it was the second biggest hit of 1996 in China.

The Emperor and the Assassin is by no means less fictional than *The Emperor's Shadow*, although most of its characters are introduced or mentioned in the *Record of the Historian*. In terms of the epic feel and warfare spectacles, Chen Kaige's film is in the line of Kurosawa

Akira's *Ran*, a remaking of *King Lear* in the form of a Japanese dynasty film. When watched closely, however, *The Emperor and the Assassin* is more of a psychological drama. Chen Kaige's focus is on the inner path from boy to Emperor, from a young hostage living in fear of being murdered to a merciless murderer, who has killed both his parents and illicit half-brothers in order to clear the way to regime. Although the film has won some applause abroad, it was a flop in China both critically and commercially: there are few good reviews.

As Wang Hongtu insightfully observes, "most Chinese audiences cannot accept the image of Ying Zheng" in *Assassin*, played by the short and stout Li Xuejian, because "this king does not possess a king's dignified manner." He talks in a sharp voice and "acts like a monomaniac who expresses inner conflicts in an exaggerating way and appears almost grotesque" (3). Although scholars can understand what the director tried to achieve through the film, Chinese audiences who have been too used to a Confucian kind of explication of both history and historical figures with an "emphasis on the rationale rather than the heart, were simply dumbstruck by such a heavy psychoanalysis" (3). Life is ugly for Ying Zheng. He finds out that his prime minister, Lü Buwei, is actually his biological father. In order to have his own heir become the king, Lü presents a girl, pregnant with his child, to the king. That child is Ying Zheng. In fear that this scandal may affect Ying's position, Lü hangs himself. Ying might have stopped him but he thinks it is better that way. Then Ying finds out that the queen, whom he calls mother, had an affair with a courtier and had two illicit children. The courtier later attempts to rebel but Ying Zheng has him, his army and his children all killed. The only time we see Ying Zheng's gentleness is when he is around Lady Zhao, with whom he has shared innocent affection since childhood. As he becomes increasingly merciless, she has to leave him so she can find someone to assassinate him. This man, is of course, Jing Ke.

Chinese audiences, who always regarded Jing Ke as a larger-than-life hero, also have a hard time accepting the assassin designed by Chen Kaige: a professional hit man who kills for money. The film begins with Jing Ke talking business to a voice, then we see him kill the entire family and whoever sees his face. Then, he finds a blind girl. He lets her go since she cannot see his face, but she wants him to kill her since she would have to beg for food for all her life. "I don't kill blind people, since they can't see my face," summarizes the killer's professional ethics. The girl, however, tricks him to come closer and tries to stab him. His sword responds more quickly than his mind, and the girl is killed. From that day, he is haunted by the memory of the girl and unable to kill or even fight. One day, he is seriously beaten as Lady Zhao passes by. She helps nurture him back to health.

Prince Dan of the Zhao Kingdom, a hostage of Ying Zheng, is finally released. The first thing he starts to do is to find an assassin. No matter how much Dan and his men try to persuade him, Jing Ke simply does not want to kill anymore. Then he falls in love with Lady Zhao, finally believes in her good cause, and agrees to assassinate Ying Zheng. Regardless of whether he succeeds or fails, this is a deadly mission. The film reveals Jing Ke to be not a patriotic hero, but an ordinary man who longs for love and a peaceful life. He feels fear before dying. Chen Kaige makes a point that no man "is a natural born hero. Various circumstances pushed him to play the role of 'hero' in history" (3).

As Yiran points out, the film has won applause abroad since foreign audiences may treat it as a Bertolucci kind of historical film or merely another *auteur* film (2), while enjoying its spectacles like they enjoyed *Brave Heart*. Many critics like Yiran, however, cannot see the connection between such a historical film and Chen Kaige's sense of cultural mission since they do not believe that the bloodshed in the film can make any positive statement about Chinese culture (2).

1.2 Women Who Do Not Make History

Besides the men who became history, both Zhou Xiaowen and Chen Kaige configured two female protagonists who play important roles in the narratives. Both women do not really have their own names. Princess Yueyang in *The Emperor's Shadow* is called "princess" or "Yueyang". While princess is a title, Yueyang is the name of a place and part of the title—like "Wales" in the title "Princess of Wales." Lady Zhao in *The Emperor and the Assassin* is called Zhao Nü, meaning Zhao woman, and Zhao is the name of a neighboring kingdom of Qin. Since women were never significant in ancient Chinese history, the introduction of women into historical films is a stone designed to kill several birds. Their beautiful images may brighten up the otherwise all-male screen, meeting the voyeuristic anticipation of audiences. Moreover, since they are not real historical figures, filmmakers can make up desirable details about them while filling in the gaps between fragments of "history."

In Zhou Xiaowen's film, Yueyang is the shadow of Ying Zheng who also desires Gao Jianli to be her shadow. As the most beloved eldest daughter of Ying, she enjoys more privileges than her siblings do. When her father promises her to Wang Ben, the son of his most accomplished general as a kind of award, Yueyang realizes that her personal happiness is not her father's first concern. The appearance of Gao Jinali comes as a ray of hope, since for the first time in her life this is the only man who dares to confront her father's seemingly absolute authority. She tries to

nurture Gao back to life, not to help her father, but for herself. Without knowing what happened exactly, Ying attributes both miracles of Gao's coming back to life and Yueyang's later standing up on her own feet as the perfect complement of *yin* and *yang*.

When Gao comes in and attempts to rape her, she embraces him after only a brief resistance. On the surface, they commit the crime of lust, but in their hearts they both do it to rebel against Ying Zheng. The film's most controversial sequence includes a parallel montage revealing Gao's conquering of the princess, on the one hand, and Ying's army striking open the gate of Yan's capital with a huge log, on the other. The montage here makes both processes of conquering equally violent. Feminist critics find the sexual violence here disturbing, even though Yueyang seems to have accepted Gao's "love" and has gotten a new "life" afterwards (Qu Yajun, "Man Gives Woman Life?" 79). I find that the sequence betrays the detail that Yueyang accepts Gao first. Holding the piece of silk with Yueyang's virgin blood on it, Gao wanted to show it to Ying, but Yueyang stops him. Before she is married to Wang Ben, she makes love with Gao again in the Temple of Ancestors, which is an extremely offensive crime.

Compared to Zhou Xiaowen's earlier depiction of rape in *The Price of Frenzy* (1987), as a result of an intense sexual anxiety, the "rape" in *The Emperor's Shadow* is a schemed act of conspiracy. Yueyang is not an innocent girl, but a daughter who risks her life to get away from the fate imposed by her father. The triangular relationship among Yueyang, Ying, and Gao still resembles the "father-son-woman" triangle of Zhang Yimou films, but the woman's rebellion here is fierce. In many ways, Yueyang is the only one who really negotiates with men: she tells her father that she would save Gao, but he has to become her zither tutor. She presses Gao to write the "Ode to Qin" and to accept the appointment as the Court Composer on the condition that her father marries her to him. When she fails in all efforts, she has the character for "prisoner" branded on her forehead before going in to her groom and commits suicide once she is there.

In comparison, Lady Zhao is a less radiant figure, although she seems more like an ancient woman. From conversations, we know that she grew up with Ying Zheng in his years as a hostage in Zhao. Without revealing their childhood stories, the director designed the character Lady Zhao partially for the purpose of reflecting Ying Zheng's past. His love for her is deep since her encouraging words and comfort have always helped him to keep fear away. After he was released from Zhao and became the King of Qin, he had her brought to Qin. She has grown into a beautiful woman, but she refuses to become a court lady. She works in his kitchen and keeps him company, being attracted to his dream of ending the wars by constructing one big, prosperous, peaceful country. She agrees to help him by going on a mission to lead an assassin to Qin so that

Ying can have an excuse to conquer Zhao without much killing. As she goes on her way to Zhao, she witnesses killings between the two kingdoms, and seeing all the children of Zhao dead, she does not believe in Ying Zheng anymore. She determines to change the original false assassination into a real one. She gets to know Jing Ke and becomes his lover. When he is killed, she announces her pregnancy to a jealous Ying Zheng, who is heartbroken for not being able to keep her for himself.

Although Lady Zhao is configured as a patriotic woman who does not believe in war and violence, she cannot change anything about history except the way of narrating history in a film. Since her role is a result of the director's rational thinking, Lady Zhao is nothing but a symbol in the film. Part of the reason why historians may recognize *The Emperor and the Assassin* as a more historical film than *The Emperor's Shadow* is because they can believe the figure of Lady Zhao, who is not as "modern" as Princess Yueyang. When Lady Zhao gives herself to Jing Ke, she does so for the big cause of "peace" rather than for love. Even if there is love between them, the way that love is presented in *Assassin* does not have lustful connotations. This may be partly why *The Emperor and the Assassin* is not as popular as *The Emperor's Shadow*.

2. Meaning of Red: Various Shades of Revolution

Both the Second and Third Generations matured by making revolution/war films, which had been instrumental in the "patriotism education" and "identity forming" before 1980, for generations of Chinese who grew up in the New China. The urge to reinterpret modern Chinese history in these films has been very appealing for directors from the Fifth Generation and on. As representative directors of the Third Generation, Xie Jin, Cui Wei, and Shui Hua are masters of revolution classics that have created a deep impact on Chinese audiences, comparable to those straightforward war films that carry forward patriotism. Cui Wei's *Song of Youth* (1959), Xie Jin's *The Red Detachment of Women* (1961), and Li Jue and Li Ang's *A Sparkling Red Stars* (1974) are a few exemplary works depicting how two young women and a boy learn about revolution and become part of the revolutionary team. In these films, the "authentic" history is constructed through an authentic telling in the form of political allegories, in which the human and inhuman, the moral and immoral, the new society and the old, and the Communist and the evil forces are clearly marked *red* and *dark*.

In the education that Chinese students have been receiving after 1949, *red* is the color of revolution. With former Prime Minister Zhou Enlai as the director-in-chief, the 1965 stage musical *The East Is Red* was produced. This spectacular "pageant" was at the same time "a

revolutionary Chinese 'epic' film, which, for all its melodramatic mold, becomes an undisputed classical interpretation, or symbolic/ritualistic reenactment, of the Chinese Communist history" (Wang Yuejin, "Melodrama" 83). As Wang Yuejin observes,

> Structured in a typical melodramatic mode, *The East Is Red* moves according to the archetypal communist historical scenario: from oppression to liberation, from suffering oblivion to recognition. [...] There is no psychology of characters, as is true of melodrama; characters appear only as signs signifying their class identities. ("Melodrama" 83)

Including a symbolic representation of major events in the path of Communist revolution, the film reaches the climax at the end with a "carnival" of people from all 56 nations in the Tiananmen Square (84).

In elementary schools, it gives students pride to become a young pioneer (or a Red Little Soldier) and to wear a red triangular scarf. The scarf, it is said, is a corner of the red flag that is dyed by the blood of those who sacrificed their life for China's happiness. All generations who grew up after 1949 are referred to as those who "grew up under the red flag". In many films, we often see heroic soldiers holding onto a red flag in battles, and senior Communists passing the red flag to younger ones. In Cui Wei's *Song of Youth* (1964), there is a scene when Lin Hong, a Communist member, gives her red sweater to Lin Daojing—a Communist-to-be—in jail before her execution by the Nationalists, which is a symbolic gesture of passing on the revolutionary tradition. No one would fail to interpret this classic rhetoric as the tradition of *hongqi daidai xiangchuan*, meaning passing down the red flag from generation to generation.

During the Cultural Revolution, youths are divided into "five red categories" and "five black categories"—the former refers to the heir of "revolutionary families" and the latter the opposite. Those who were most loyal to Mao received the armband marked "Red Guards". "The washed-out redness" dominated the screen. It is hard to tell whether life imitated art or art imitated life during "the massive madness of the 'all red' (*yi pian hong*) plague" in the chaotic years (Wang Yuejin, "Melodrama" 84).

Since the encoding of the red party, red government, and red regime had been deeply rooted in Chinese people's minds until the 1980s, the reinterpretation of the meaning of red has become an important element in the reconstruction of revolution history and history in general. Among fifth-generation directors, for instance, Zhang Yimou is best known for using the color red. From *Red Sorghum* to *Raise the Red Lantern*, to his later films, there are numerous scenes filled with the lush, intense, and vibrant reds, forming a unique rhythm on their own. The ubiquitous red in a Zhang Yimou film can be interpreted as a symbolic color of love, lust, passion, ecstasy, happiness, freedom, life, death, and the sacrificed, but not as a color of revolution.

In Feng Xiaoning's war trilogy, the color red is seen through Western eyes, weakening the imposing codes of revolutionary discourse. In *Red River Valley*, for instance, red appears as the color of sacrifice, blood, and fire, in sharp contrast to the colors of a peaceful Tibet: clear-sky blue and snow-mountain white. In *Purple Sunset*, the Soviet Red Army doctor Naja recounts the days she spent with Yang and Akiko in the golden forest as the most beautiful autumn in her life. Although the punctuation shots of the huge setting sun are actually in red, Naja remembers landscapes of the sunset as being purple. In *Lover's Grief over the Yellow River*, the American pilot Owen comes back to China to mourn Angel and others who gave their lives for his. He brings the black and white photos of these people that he kept for years. As he reminsces, those monochromic images become landscapes filled with a bright red and warm yellow, which, previously, seldom appeared in revolution/war films. In those films, the symbolic red is often saved until the final moment of victory. By using bright colors and polished imagery in every frame, Feng Xiaoning has established a new look of revolution history.

Besides Feng Xiaoning, Ye Daying is another director who has consciously reconstructed the revolution in a global cultural context. The Anti-Fascist film, *Red Cherry* "writes the inhuman history of the Nazi on the virgin body of Chuchu, who symbolizes the purity of mankind" (Wang Desheng, "Popularized History" 62). Ye Daying's father, once a student of the Ivanov International Academy in Moscow, told him about those Chinese students' experiences in the former Soviet Union during World War II. Through his father's connection, he talked to more than twenty others with such experiences, including daughters and sons of Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi (former Chairman), Zhu De (former Commander-in-Chief), and other Communist leaders (Ye Daying, "Red Cherry" 48). With the help of a Russian film studio, the entire film was shot on location near Moscow. Since the film was promoted as one based on the true experiences of real people, which was affirmed by the credits, Chinese audiences poured into cinemas in anticipation of a historical film experience. *Red Cherry* did not disappoint them since the fate of Chuchu and Luo Xiaoman were revealed with startling details at each turn. As Ye Daying confirms, "all the details in the film are based on real experiences," and the stories of the two young protagonists were put together based on the personal experiences of the more than twenty seniors he interviewed (50). He visited the World War II Museum in Moscow where he saw the tattooed human skin on display (Lu Hongshi et al. 44). Chen Xiaoming calls Ye Daying's film history a "neo-realist" (*xin zhenshi zhuyi*) history (45) which weaves the threads of seemingly personal experiences into a colorful fabric.

Ye Daying continued his quest for revolution history in *A Time to Remember* (1998). I will refer to it by its Chinese title, *Red Lovers*, which is much more meaningful than the English

title. Compared to *Red Cherry*, which does not really define its title through the film, *Red Lovers* is a more conscious reinterpretation of the color red through the eyes of, again, an American. The film takes us back to 1936, on the eve of the anti-Japanese war, a time when the Nationalists were eliminating the Chinese Red Army while cruelly murdering underground Communists and suspects. This time, Hollywood actor Todd Babcock is Dr. Robert Payne, an American surgeon who writes, dances, and lives a worry free life, as his voice-over tells us at the beginning of the film:

> Many years ago, I lived in Old Shanghai. Like all the foreigners stationed there, I enjoyed some very special privileges. We almost forgot about the tough times at home: the Depression never touched us in Shanghai, the Paris of the Orient. It was a terrible time to be Chinese, but nothing seemed to bother us. We were there for a good time.

Then we see Robert showing off his dancing skills in a nightclub, where he is introduced to a powerful man of the district, Hao Ming. Hao Ming claims to be in a "similar business" with our surgeon, only he "operates on society" and "uses a knife to kill and not to cure."

A Chinese woman named Qiu Qiu, a beautiful stranger who knew about him by reading his article in *The China Review*, comes to Robert's door one rainy night to ask for help. When Robert shows reluctance by giving the excuse that doctors in his hospital do not pay home visits, the woman (whom, we learn later, received her education in a missionary school) reminds him of his Hippocratic oath. Amazed and attracted by this mysterious English-speaking woman, he enters the house of Jin, whose body has "gunshot wounds from at least five occasions, as well as another wound caused by a hand grenade exploding at close range." Fragments left in Jin's body cause convulsions and excruciating pain. Without knowing it, Robert enters the incredible life of a Communist couple—nominal husband and wife. As one of the most famous revolution classics *The Everlasting Radio Signals* tells us, if this kind of couple falls in love after a long partnership, they have to send in an application to the Party to get married. Robert, however, is concerned about whether Qiu Qiu really loves Jin, even after Qiu Qiu tells him that they are only comrades.

When Robert goes to the couple's place to deliver a bottle of painkillers the next day, Hao Ming's men are arresting numerous innocent people in the neighborhood. Involuntarily, Robert witnesses how people suffer during the White Terror under Chiang Kei-shek's slogan that they "would rather kill three thousand wrongly than let one [Communist] go." The kind American tries to reason with Hao Ming, but Hao Ming says that he does not have a choice. Hao Ming used to be a Communist himself and endured savage torture without giving away his comrade. When he was forced to choose between killing a comrade and losing his daughter's life, he gave in. From that day on, however, his daughter sees him as a monster, which he truly becomes. Feeling

ashamed of his becoming a traitor, his wife sends his daughter away and commits suicide. When his men later seize Qiu Qiu near a drug store, he tries to be a good father to her, but she shoots him. In court, when she is asked to state her relationship with the victim, she says: "Our relationship is one between a revolutionary and a traitor."

Robert finds Jin a totally different man when he is not in pain: squatting on huge maps of China, Jin has "all of China under his feet." Robert finds him very romantic. Jin confesses to Robert that for a long time he followed his convictions as he followed his ex-wife An Xia. Only after her death did he become a true revolutionary. Educated in France and able to speak English, Jin is an intellectual Communist unfamiliar to Chinese audiences, who consciously attempts to "let the outside, especially the Westerners, know more about China." When he is having a seizure, he can only calm down when someone reads to him a poem from an *Anthology of Russian Literature*, which Robert also knows: "The sun rises/ An eagle flies toward heaven/ Suddenly it stops, as if frozen in the blue sky/ No one knows why it flies/ What it needs." Later on, we know that he relates the eagle imagery to An Xia, who jumped out of the window of their apartment to warn him that their home was occupied by enemies who set a trap for him. Since the building was high, her body stayed in the air for a moment. The persistent memory of that moment overshadows Jin's feelings for Qiu Qiu. After knowing that Qiu Qiu is pregnant with his child, and that she has killed Hao Ming to protect him, Jin decides to turn himself in for the life of Qiu Qiu, though he is not supposed to do so as a high-ranking Communist. Having Hong Kong star Leslie Cheung play the role of Jin was an idea that interested many critics. Reviews commented on Jin as "a brand new image of a Communist member" who is more of a great lover than a soldier (Shao Mujun, "Leslie Cheung as Communist" 2).

As an admirer of Jin, Qiu Qiu feels lucky that she is chosen to protect Jin. She knows Robert's feelings for her and does not reject him, but she is so committed to the revolution that she could not possibly have a romance with Robert. Her devotion to Jin, including playing the role of An Xia when Jin calls for her in his hallucination, does not have a sexual overtones. What attracts Qiu Qiu to Jin emotionally is his deep love for An Xia. When she assumes An Xia's role and saves his life, Jin falls in love with her.

Equally romantic is the narrator Robert, who falls in love with Qiu Qiu at first sight—she is in a red dress and a red cape. For love, he loses his job in the hospital, as well as his so-called friends. He risks his life more than once for Qiu Qiu and Jin, having a strange sympathy for them. When he loses Qiu Qiu to childbirth, he does not hesitate to adopt the baby and names her Pearl. The film then cuts to 1949. On their way to the port for a ship going back to America, Robert and Pearl see a parade with thousands of soldiers and people dancing with red strips. Attracted by the

warm atmosphere of celebration, Pearl turns around and follows the parade. Robert suddenly decides that he will stay:

> I'm soaked in crimson red and look upon these smiling faces. I start to understand Qiu Qiu and Jin's choices. They dedicated their love to their ideals, and their spirit lives on in this victory. Suddenly, I discover what is truly romantic. They have followed their passion into history. It is their loyalty to each other and to their cause that deserves to be remembered forever.

Without experiencing the revolution, Robert "is somehow similar to today's Chinese audiences" who can readily understand the color red as the color of romance, the conviction of revolution as one of religion, and a total devotion in terms of passion.

For Ye Daying, the initial impulse for making *Red Lovers* was discrepancy between what he had seen in revolution films and what he had learned from the real experiences of his parents ("Red Lovers" 76). In order to make the role of Robert believable, he invited two scriptwriters to rewrite the original script twice. During his discussions with them, he learned about the American mentality but insisted on keeping his own views on many details (77). Generally speaking, having Hao Ming face the hard choice (Bian Guoli 69), adding the "impurity" of love to "pure" revolution (70), and narrating the history in a poetic mood (Sicun 67), are Ye Daying's contributions to revolution films, though his film needs more convincing details to support its history-writing. Otherwise, *Red Lovers* would be merely a remaking of *Casablanca* in a Chinese context. (Ye Daying said that the situation where Jin needs to hear the poem read to him to calm down was inspired by the fact that Zhou Enlai used to read Mao's poems when he was in pain [78]. Jin's poem and the book called *Anthology of Russian Literature* are his creations based on the "Russian complex" that many Chinese had.) With more than 90% of the dialogue in English, we could say that the inclusion of foreign voices in constructing Chinese revolution history is also a meaningful reinterpretation of red. Though there are still doubts about whether "revolution history can grow in the soil of popular culture" (Cheng Qingsong 74), at least filmmakers have been searching for new possibilities.

3. Darkest Nights or Sunniest Days: Collective versus Personal

From 1979 to 1986, third- and fourth-generation directors seemed to be the most eager interpreters of the Cultural Revolution. Xie Jin reached the highest point of his career with *Legend of the Tianyun Mountains* (1980) and *Hibiscus Town* (1986), drawing hundreds of millions of viewers. Critics have observed that before the Cultural Revolution, the main theme of Xie Jin's revolution films was "revolution saved people"; while the theme for his Cultural

Revolution films was "people saved revolution" (Li Yiming, "Xie Jin" 19). The basic structure of his films has remained the same—with gender and politics at two poles. The themes he could not overtly present in the revolution genre, such as love, sexuality, humanity, and critical passion, have all come into his films on the Cultural Revolution. Replacing political codes with moral ones, Xie Jin enjoyed a new round of popularity with his moral/sexual melodramas performed on the stage of politics and history (Wang Hui, "Politics" 30). In China, an ambitious director cannot afford not to show concern for history, and Xie Jin's making of the *Opium War* (1997) is his attempt to achieve another high point. In his most popular films, Xie Jin has constructed an authentic narrative discourse that has not only inscribed history, but also conquered audiences. This is also why the most relevant and frequent critique of Xie Jin lies in gender issues rather than history or nationalism.

The Fourth Generation emerged with a body of works criticizing the Cultural Revolution as a period that severely distorted human nature. Yang Yanjing's *A Troubled Man's Smile* (1979), for instance, depicts how journalists were forced to lie during the political frenzy. His *Narrow Street* (1980) tells the story of a girl—whose hair was shaved by gangs—who had to pretend that she was a boy. Fourth-generation directors' telling of the Cultural Revolution is again not about history itself but "a tragic experience in an individual's life," "a destined loss that can never be regained," and "a small story in a big time" of crisis (Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 11). The theme of such a telling, is either "the true would eventually overcome the false," or a wounded memory of a "sacrificed youth"—which is the title of Zhang Nuanxin's 1986 film.

The *ubiquitous presence* of Cultural Revolution in both third- and fourth-generation works have formed a sharp contrast to the *constant absence* of it in the Fifth Generation's repertoire. Growing up during the period, the Fifth Generation's age group includes many who were first innocent victims, and then radical rebels, during the political movement. As Chen Mo points out, they are "the best-qualified, or, most authoritative interpreters" of the Cultural Revolution, but very few of them have shot films about the period, or the life experience of their generation" (*Chen Kaige* 146). Although Chen Kaige's *King of the Children* (1987) depicts the story of a sent-down youth's experience as the teacher of a village school, its isolated setting, simple plot, and philosophical thinking make it an allegory about culture rather than the Cultural Revolution. Chen Kaige's *Farewell, My Concubine* (1993) and Zhang Yimou's *To Live* (1994) have also touched upon the period, but these works, in many ways, are still timeless allegories. *Farewell, My Concubine* portrays a female impersonator of Beijing Opera, Dieyi, who cannot distinguish between life and art and identifies himself with Yuji—the concubine of King of Chu—a role that once made him famous. He endures many physical and spiritual tortures as he

grows up, and as the wheel of history turns, he dies just like Yuji dies for her King. *To Live* is the survival story of Fu Gui, an ordinary man who faced death many times but managed to live even though he has lost someone he knew or loved at each turn of "history."

Tian Zhuangzhuang's *The Blue Kite* (1993) is the most realistic representation of a time (1957-66) when one political movement followed another. The film is the account of a boy, Tietou, who tells of his three fathers—father, uncle, stepfather, as he calls them—all died in his boyhood. It is the most effortless film narrative among all of Tian's films, since it is "a theme, a story [he wants] to tell:"

> I feel that nobody is able to remember a historical event clearly. If you had experienced it yourself, like the Tiananmen Square events, you would still not comprehend all the factors involved. But once you are involved in it, you become enthusiastic and invest your own emotion in it. That to me is the most important thing. What I'm interested in portraying is the relationship between people and politics. Not a film that makes the audience comprehend what happened in 1957—the anti-rightist campaign, the Great Leap Forward. To me that's not important. (Sklar, "People" 38)

In the same vein, perhaps what Chen Kaige wanted to express in *Farewell* was people's powerlessness in front of their *fate*, while Zhang Yimou's film revealed how much a man had to "endure" in order to live (Chow, "We Endure").

Scholars such as Dai Jinhua, Chen Mo, and Yao Xiaomeng have all tended to interpret new ideologies in fifth-generation works in relation to their experience of the Cultural Revolution, which has appeared as "an absent presence" in their films (Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 24). In Dai Jinhua's vocabulary, fifth-generation directors are the "spiritual sons of the Cultural Revolution," who "performed a patricide," both symbolic and real, "in the name of the Father." If the Red Guard movement was "a carnival of the sons", the sent-down experience in the name of "giving them a wider space" was where "they would complete their coming-of-age ceremony" (25-27). Most fifth-generation members did not qualify as orthodox Red Guards because their families were problematic. Cameraman Xiao Feng once confessed:

> Now someone discussed the Fifth Generation in terms of "Red Guard" consciousness, I am not sure whether this is pointing to the countertradition intention that resembles the rebellion of the Red Guards. My family was shattered during the Cultural Revolution, and personally speaking, I feel that I can't take vengeance enough. When cooling down, however, I see the other side of the problem. Fifth-generation filmmakers all received orthodox education in their childhood, but Mao's slogan that "we dare to get the emperor down from the horse" opened a crack in the thoughts of the Chinese. Mao told us not just to follow Confucius and encouraged us to have some rebellious spirit. (Bai Xiaoding 35)

Chen Kaige told a reporter in 1999 that he had three ambitions: "to reach out to global productions, to reflect the old history, and to revisit their own history, which is the Cultural Revolution" (Yu Shaowen 7). In the late 1980s, Chen Kaige completed an autobiography *Young Kaige*, which talks about his experiences as both a Red Guard and an educated youth. During an interview, he disclosed one of the most haunting memories:

> During the Cultural Revolution, my father was titled "Nationalist element, historical counter-revolutionary and rightist." I turned from a good student to a kid from a "black family". In the "autocratic" No. 4 High School of Beijing, I was discriminated against. [...] During a denunciation meeting, I called out a slogan condemning my father and pushed him. I was only 14. At the age of 14, I already learned about betraying my father. (Luo Xueying, *Open Your Heart* 306)

In *Farewell, My Concubine*, Chen portrays the spectacle of the Red Guards' denunciation meetings, where thousands gathered to watch some "bad elements" including the three protagonists being humiliated. When the Red Guards push Xiaolou (who was famous for playing the role of King of Chu) to "denounce" his long-time partner Dieyi, Xiaolou first tries to resist for apparent reasons: good or bad, the two grew up together like brothers. When the Red Guards push him, he starts to "denounce" some trivial things about Dieyi in a dramatic manner: "He is an opera craze. He plays Opera for any audiences including the Japanese and Nationalist soldiers." The Red Guards think he is trying to play a trick and insist that he tell some important matters. Xiaolou then starts to tell Dieyi's dark secrets: "He was addicted to opium and smoked a great deal of the blood and sweat of the working people. [...] He even *did it* with a powerful man. Did you?"[7] Totally shocked, Dieyi is dumbstruck and soon jumps up to denounce Xiaolou's wife and his rival Ju Xian in revenge: "Do you all know who this woman is? She was once the most expensive prostitute of the Flower Blossom Brothel!" Then the Red Guards turn back to Xiaolou, asking him whether it is true and whether he still loves her. Too eager to protect himself, Xiaolou says, "No, I don't love her." This statement costs Ju Xian's life: she hangs herself in her wedding clothes after being humiliated and betrayed.

During this historical event he later called the "movement of the gangs/punks," Chen Kaige was hurt and hurt others for fear of being rejected by the majority, since "the truth is always with the majority"—as people believed. Like his characters in *Farewell*, he would do anything to protect himself, even condemning his own father. The betrayal of his father became a memory that first shocked his self-esteem and then haunted him with a guilt that cannot be resolved. The guilt also came from the realization of being cheated. People said to the youngsters

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[7] Here Duan Xiaolou is implying on Cheng Dieyi's possible gay relationship with Master Yuan.

from black families that, "you cannot choose your family, but you can choose your own path." They were also encouraged "to draw a clear line between themselves and their families in order to show their faith in revolution" (Chen Kaige, *Young* 60). When they actually made their choice, like Chen Kaige and many others did, the "right choice" still did not guarantee acceptance from the majority. Such wounded feelings became the source of two conflicting forces that are constantly present in their films: a longing to return to the crowd, and an eagerness to break away from it.

During my research, I found that a leading director of the Japanese New Wave, Oshima Nagisa, has watched fifth-generation filmmakers closely. Nagisa talked to Chen Kaige and other fifth-generation directors on several occasions, and demonstrated a good understanding of their works. As a cultural iconoclast of Japan, Oshima's experience has much resemblance that of the Fifth Generation. Oshima Nagisa grew up during the Pacific War, a time of extreme political repression in Japan. As Maureen Turim points out, for his generation, "adolescence was a coming-to-terms with the nation's fallibility and the deceit practiced by the powerful and the respected. The realization *après-coup* of the Japanese propaganda machine having been a false foundation of childhood truth" left a sense of shame in this generation that turned its doubts upon Japan as a nation and a tradition (8).

Many tend to see the Cultural Revolution as a unique historical event, but as Chen Kaige told Oshima it was a time when life and death became a question for many ordinary human beings, even kids (Chen Mo, *Chen Kaige* 8). In terms of its "after-effect" on the mind of artists, its damage is comparable to that of wars such as the Pacific War for the Japanese and the Vietnam War for the Americans. As Asian filmmakers, both Oshima and fifth-generation members aim at a world audience and attempt to explore "human nature." In other words, they want to reflect the fate of individuals, especially on occasions when it is in conflict with group interest or national benefit. Since Confucian culture demands that individuals sacrifice themselves for the interest of group/nation, the voices of the individuals have been legitimately suppressed. This common goal is the ground for the Fifth Generation as both an artistic group and a film movement. Even though each member approaches the goal from a different perspective, one of their most effective strategies is always to focus on the marginalized—be it region, race, gender, profession or narrative voice.

When asked why his films were filled with gray instead of bright colors, leaving an impression of suffering and bitterness, fifth-generation director Wu Ziniu answered:

> I am trying to get rid of the shadows in my life. History has cast too much shadow on our generation. I was born in the fifties. When I was just old enough to understand things, there was the anti-rightist movement, then there were suddenly rightists around me. People can hardly understand the psychological pressure this would cause. Soon there was the Cultural Revolution and my family was affected. I was sent down. In Sichuan, these movements were crueler than in Beijing. [...] At a Berlin film festival, reporters asked me whether I was an optimist or a pessimist. I said I was the latter. (Jia Leilei and Yang Yuanying 43)

To a certain extent, we can say that overcoming the fear or this "psychological pressure" caused by one-man politics is the driving force for the narratives of fifth-generation films. The pessimism appears as a "cool" tone against the heat of the "Sun"—a metaphor for Chairman Mao that was used for a few decades.

In 1995, a famous Chinese actor who appeared in many films by third, fourth and fifth-generation directors, Jiang Wen, made his directorial debut with a film causing more than a sensation: *In the Heat of the Sun*. Its teenage actor Xia Yu, who was only 16 at the time of shooting, won the best actor award at the 1994 Venice Film Festival. The film is again set during the Cultural Revolution. Instead of depicting the historical period as the darkest night as many third- and fourth-generation filmmakers did, *Heat* celebrates it as a cheerful, passionate, and confusing memory of youth—a time when every day was sunny. Although the film was a commercial success, it was not made to be a commercial film since the film in fact challenged the mainstream mode while rejecting the collective memory of the Cultural Revolution. As Dai Jinhua points out, "it became an important film of 1995 exactly because it offended so many things" (*Landscape* 449).

Rather than attempting to create an authentic history, the film reveals the uncertain world of Ma Xiaojun, a teenager of the early 1970s whose dream includes becoming a war hero when World War III breaks out. He has a talent for opening various locks, and one day, he opens a door that leads to a girl's bedroom. He falls in love with the girl right away just by seeing a *color photo* of hers on the wall. Most audiences would forget the fact that there was no color photo at the time until the sequence when Ma Xiaojun comes to visit Mi Lan and only finds the photo to be a black and white one. Anyhow, from that day on, he cannot help thinking of her. The girl's name, as he later finds out, is Mi Lan. In order to show her off to his friends, he introduces Mi Lan to them; he even jumps down from a high chimney just to impress her. He feels jealous the first time seeing her flirting with Liu Yiku, an older, more handsome friend of his. Later on, the gang has a party in the famous Moscow Restaurant in Beijing, celebrating the birthday of both Ma Xiaojun and Liu Yiku. The two boys get into a fight for Mi Lan. Ma Xiaojun repeatly stabs at Liu Yiku with a broken bottle, strangely, without hurting him. Just as the film comes to an end,

Ma Xiaojun's voice-over suddenly begins to question the credibility of this story, saying that the harder he tries to remember what happened exactly, the further he departs from the truth.

In this film, history is almost evacuated of its meaning and becomes the space for a boy's daydreams, passion, and violence—imagined or real—to be acted out. The boys get into merciless gang fights and share an innocent porn cult, and yet the story is more about youth than anything else. As Jiang Wen said, "The sky then was bluer. The clouds then were whiter. And even the sunshine was also warmer. It seems that it never rained in those days—there was simply no rainy season. No matter what I did, my memory for then is nostalgic and beautiful. I shot the film following this kind of feelings" (qtd. in Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 450). The last sequence of the film is in black and white, showing a grown up Ma Xiaojun (Jiang Wen) taking a ride with friends in a limousine. The black and white that are usually used to enforce a historical look are employed here to present today's reality, which further distances the memories of history and dismisses them as daydreams of a young boy on a sunny day.[8]

After watching the film, Han Xiaolei said: "the film is different from fifth-generation films on the Cultural Revolution. Jiang Wen was not restricted in any sense, without having concerns about any group [interest] or duty. He just expressed an experience of life" (Li Erwei, *Jiang Wen* 137). Wang Anyi said:

> I watched *In the Heat of the Sun* not long ago and was quite touched. In my heart, I envy Jiang Wen for being able to express his thoughts and his self so directly. You almost forget that you are watching a film. Instead, you see a vivid young Jiang Wen. This is the debut work of a young man, something that one can only have once in life. (16)

Joan Chen also sees the film as how a boy grows up, calling it one of the greatest films ever made in China (136). The film is compared to Taiwan director Edward Yang's *A Brighter Summer Day* and *Rebel of the Neon God* and other stories of youth. What I think is most significant is that this film, for the first time, sets history on the opposite side of a really personal story that has not been archived by the Fifth Generation. In this aspect, younger filmmakers born in the 1960s and later, who were too young to remember the Cultural Revolution, are more likely to "get personal" in telling any history.

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[8] Zhang Yimou's *The Road Home* (1999) also constructs the past (the love story between the narrator's parents) and the present (the story surrounding her mother's mourning of her father) in color and black and

4. Forgotten Corners: His Stories versus Hers

This section will deal with another kind of history-writing as presented in two films by female directors: *Blush* (1994) by fifth-generation member Li Shaohong and *Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl* (1998) by actress-turned Chinese American director Joan Chen. *Blush* was the number four box office hit in China in 1995,[9] an achievement that greatly encouraged other Chinese filmmakers who were making various "commercial turns." The film has received both a Silver Bear from the Berlinale and favorable reviews from North America, though many Chinese critics do not like the way it "gets lost" in an "attempt to accommodate commodity culture and market operation" (Sheng Min and Xiao Li 86). *Xiu Xiu* was screened in over 100 movie theatres in the US and received excellent ratings by *Time Magazine* and other prestigious journals. Because the film was shot without the Chinese Film Bureau's permission on location in China, the film has been banned in China and thus no critical source from the mainland is available. The Taiwan Film Academy showered it with seven Golden Horse Awards including best picture, director, actor, actress, music, original song, and adapted screenplay.

I choose to examine the two films here because they have intrigued many reviewers, but none has recognized these films' value in filling the blanks of history by writing "her-stories" that should be valued and better known. Li Shaohong and Joan Chen are directors from very different backgrounds, but they both show concerns about women as engendered individuals and their destinations in times of drastic historical change.

4.1 Li Shaohong's *Blush*

The commercial success of *Blush* has evoked many discussions of its story but blinded some critics from seeing its cultural value. Since Li Shaohong established a cinematic style which Tony Rayns called a "spot-on social realism with sharp psychological insights" in her previous films (Yeung), many felt disappointed with *Blush* and readily attributed what they did not appreciate to the director's "commercial turn." Yin Hong, who has written favorably on Li Shaohong's other films, made a not-so-favorable list of *Blush*'s "commercial considerations" including a "promotion of the patriarchal values" ("Blush" 13-14). Rayns, on the contrary, called

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white respectively, which lends a nostalgic feeling towards the past. Both *The Road Home* and *In the Heat of the Sun* reverse the shift between monochromic and color employed in *Schindler's List*.

[9] "Domestic Box Office Record in 1995 (Top Ten)" in *Film Art*, 3 (1996): 4. With a relatively small budget of 2.8 million (RMB), *Blush* earned 2 million RMB just for its first run in Beijing, which is indeed rare

the film a "women's movie like no other" (Yeung). Apparently, the film does not merely offer "a tactile pleasure in the visuals" (Ebert), it "hides a lot beneath the surface" (Kraicer, "Blush"). This "surface" may well be "a cinematic soap opera" with such motifs as "attempted suicides, unplanned pregnancies, tearful confessions, and jealous suspicions" (Berardinelli, "Blush"), or a political drama that covertly criticizes "the oppressiveness of the Chinese Communist regime" (Schwartz, "Hong Fen") depending on what one wants to prove.

The deeper meaning beneath the surface, as many critics find, is constantly "slipping" (Sheng Min and Xiao Li 86; Zhang Wei and Ying Xiong 218). A careful and balanced reading of *Blush* is offered by Jian Xu, which compares the film to its original novella by Su Tong within the context of commodity culture in China of the 1990s, asserts Li Shaohong's efforts in reducing the voyeuristic intention of the novella's narrative language. I feel it is necessary to explore here a significant yet largely overlooked issue that Li Shaohong intends to raise, namely, the problem of history writing from the personal perspectives of women (Zhang Wei and Ying Xiong 218-19).

As a popular writer known for so-called "post-history" writing, Su Tong deconstructs the illusion of "historicity" or "historical objectivity" through his subjective narrative of stories concerning the decline of families (Wu Qiong 81). In Su Tong's writings, the "decline" often occurs along a series of sexual encounters, which provides the reader with a guilty pleasure through a voyeuristic narrative language and the configuration of beautiful women whose sexualized bodies invoke both fetishism and misogyny in male desire. His novel *Rice* and the novella trilogy including "The Exodus of 1934," "The Opium Family," and "Raise the Red Lanterns" are all variations on a similar theme.[10] Li Shaohong said that the novella "Blush" touched her with its depiction of "two women's personalities" ("Female Consciousness" 212), which lead them to different destinations. When it came to actual adaptation, however, the director pondered many other things:

> Since we always look at an individual from a social perspective, we may feel strange when looking at society from a personal perspective. When we try to do the latter, which is not something within the norm, issues of the appreciation habit come in. What is your theme anyway? Personalities of two marginal women? Does that count as a theme? It is not significant or meaningful. Well, should there be a meaning that is not social in a work of art? Is it really insignificant, or that we haven't disclosed its significance? (213)

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since China started its annual import of 10 big-budget productions from Hollywood and elsewhere (Zhang Tongdao 27).

[10] For a good critique on the issue of sexuality, see Lu Tonglin's critique on Su Tong's trilogy in her *Misogyny, Cultural Nihilism, and Oppositional Politics*, 129-54.

Why did Li Shaohong choose to tell a story about two former prostitutes? In their articles, both Yin Hong and Jian Xu referred to famous literary works portraying women who sell only their bodies but not their souls, but Li Shaohong's interest lay more in their marginalized cultural identity than issues of morality. While adapting *Blush*, she realized that the representation of women was actually about the personalization of women, since within the social-realist framework, a woman was never an individual, but always a symbol of an idealized group (211). As the director herself points out,

> The year 1949 was such a moment in China: the Communist Party established a new government and the old structure of the society experienced great changes. The working class became the masters while rich people like Lao Pu lost his original social status, turning into a marginalized person. Prostitutes were in a very subtle position according to Chairman Mao's class division. They are the oppressed, who got affected by Capitalist thoughts, thus belonging to the Hooligan Proletarian class, which is different from real proletarians. Around 1950, the entire country abolished prostitution, all brothel madams were considered enemies and executed. Prostitutes are organized to be rehabilitated through labor, in order to become working class women and get rid of their capitalist stains. ("My Feminine Consciousness" 211)

In the 1990s, when prostitution reappeared in China, Su Tong's telling of the prostitute-reform story from around 1950 was very meaningful in its urge to reinterpret history (Wu Qiong 81). Li Shaohong noticed that in Su Tong's narration, "history is no longer an objective history, but one of personal experience." Departing from Su Tong's narrative, she explored a bolder storytelling by following "the emotional changes of a woman," making notes of whatever she saw, "without worrying too much about overall objectivity and rationale" (Zhang Wei and Ying Xiong 219).

Critics notice that "the film is very faithful to the original in terms of plot, character and atmosphere, though at a certain point, it drifts away" (Sheng Min and Xiao Li 87). Compared to Zhang Yimou's adaptations, Li Shaohong has indeed kept more than a basic storyline. The film does not just "drift away" at "a certain point," it departs from the novella and arrives at a different platform.

We do not know the location of the story in the novella, but the film opens in Suzhou, the Venice of China, where gondolas are taking prostitutes away from their brothels. Then we *hear* something not in the novella: a woman's voice-over that narrates the story in a southern dialect. Most characters in the film speak southern dialects while the Communist soldiers and officers from the North all speak Mandarin. The main characters can speak Mandarin, but they only do so

in response to Mandarin-speaking cadres. The juxtaposition of the linguistic differences here is as realistic as political since most mainland films are in Mandarin only.[11]

Within the first five minutes, we also see the contrast between Qiuyi and Xiao'e, whose respective body language says much about their personalities: Qiuyi is a tall, beautiful, and self-assured woman, while Xiao'e has a pretty face but seems very dependent. The two best friends are parted very soon—Qiuyi is bold enough to run away and seeks refuge with her previous client-lover Lao Pu; Xiao'e is taken to the Rehabilitation Center with other women.

Then through a foculization on Xiao'e, we see the process of rehabilitation: after a medical examination and getting a haircut, all the former prostitutes wearing colorful chongsams (a close-fitting dress with high neck and slit skirt) at the beginning of the film change into gray unisex uniforms. In the evening, they are put into one wide bed (as in hostels) and wonder what will happen to them. A woman asks Xiao'e, "what does rehabilitation mean?" "Don't ask me," Xiao'e says. Another voice replies: "it means no more prostitution, and we have to forget about men." The first woman continues: "how are we going to live then?" The other voice replies: "we have to support ourselves through laboring."

The next day we see the women preparing cottons and making quilts. When others are singing "the Communist Party showered us with love" right before the lunch break, Xiao'e is looking at her bleeding blistered hands. Then, while others begin their lunch, a soldier discovers Xiao'e attempting suicide. A meeting is then held because of the incident, and in a classroom a few female officers are trying to enlighten the former prostitutes.

Officer A: We, women of the New Society, must learn self-respect and independence. The Old Society treated women as chattel, but we are our own masters now. Xiao'e, please tell us, what is the true intention behind your suicide attempt?
Xiao'e: My hands are bleeding. There's no end to the work. I couldn't take it, so I thought I'd better die.
Officer A: That is not the main reason though. You've been oppressed and exploited by your brothel for many years. You didn't have the strength to rebel. You're afraid you'll end up in such a position again, isn't that it?
Xiao'e: I don't know. I'm so scared.
Officer A: Don't be afraid. We've abolished prostitution. No one will harm you again. The brothel-keepers are the criminals. Denounce them in public!
Xiao'e: I'd be too ashamed to talk about those things.
Officer B: We didn't ask you to tell the dirty things. Do you know what "to denounce" means? Tell us how you're tricked into the brothel, how they beat you up when you tried to escape. The point is to call in the blood debt with your enemy.
Woman A: You know, they made us take a dozen Johns a day.
Woman B: Xiao'e, you could tell about how the madam swore at you.
Woman C: When we were pregnant, she forced us to swallow tadpoles so we'd miscarry.

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[11] On other usage of the dialect in Chinese films, see Nie Xinru, "Dialect and Film."

At this point, other women seem to have a clue about what "denounce" means, but Xiao'e has nothing to denounce: "Maybe you don't know about this, but I was born at Red Happiness Inn. No one's ever taken care of me, so I've always had to look after myself. You all come from good families, but I was born to be a whore." A long moment of silence occurs here. Apparently, the eloquent officers never encountered a woman like Xiao'e before, who accepts her disgraceful profession with ease. The blunt honesty of Xiao'e makes her true voice heard and compels an officer to relate her own experience:

> Officer A: Let me tell you a true story. There was a female student, whose father died when she was two. Her mother struggled to raise her from elementary school through college. One day, someone told her that her mother was a prostitute. Many years passed before she knew that her mother had suffered.

The officer chokes at the end of her story. While other listeners are in tears, Xiao'e alone remains unmoved. As Jian Xu observes, the prostitutes in *Blush* "clearly lack the 'refined' feelings" of which Maslova (in Tolstoy's *Resurrection*) and Lizzie (in Sartre's *The Respectable Prostitute*) are capable—meaning, they do not feel ashamed. Their bodies register no painful history of being forced into the trade of the flesh" (128).

Xiao'e's speech is important here since it is against both the Communist teaching ideal and Confucian values. Generally speaking, prostitution was a humiliating thing forced on women, but there were women like Xiao'e who never received any moral education and were concerned only about their own physical well-being. In the film, she first flirts with Qiuyi's lover, Lao Pu, gets into bed with him, and then persuades him to marry her. Once married, she fights with him over every little thing since his modest salary can no longer maintain a comfortable life. Her complaints indirectly push him into committing a crime that eventually takes his life: he steals a big sum of money so Xiao'e lives the life of a rich mistress for a week. She then gives their son to Qiuyi and leaves with a man from the North.

Compared to Xiao'e, Qiuyi is the one with more dignity who tries to make her own choices. First, she risks her life to escape so she will not end up in the reformatory. Even though she has a family in town, she seeks refuge with Lao Pu, a rich playboy and the only regular customer she has never taken a penny from. Her staying there makes his mother, Mrs. Pu, a woman with status, very unhappy. Mrs. Pu confronts Qiuyi one day, asking her how long she will be staying. Qiuyi replies: "I am a guest of your son, and I will leave when your son asks me to." Pressed by his mother, Lao Pu suggests to Qiuyi that they find a love-nest somewhere else. Qiuyi interprets the suggestion as Lao Pu's concession to his mother at her cost, and then demands her

wages. When Lao Pu pulls some bills out of his wallet in shock, Qiuyi tears them up and leaves with her pride hurt.

Still not willing to go home, she chooses to stay in a Buddhist nunnery even though she has to have her hair shaved. When Lao Pu comes looking for her on a rainy day and proposes to her, she shuts him outside. Li Shaohong adds a few details that are not in the novella for a more convincing characterization: just as Qiuyi settles down, it is suspected that she is pregnant. Rejected by her mother who does not wish to have the baby born at home, Qiuyi goes back to the nunnery only to find she is unwelcome there as well. She has a miscarriage and almost loses her life, but the nuns take pity on her and she survives.

Meanwhile, Xiao'e and Lao Pu are dating and decide to get married after Xiao'e gets pregnant. At their wedding banquet, Qiuyi has a bracelet sent to Xiao'e in the noisy restaurant and leaves. When Xiao'e runs into the street to have a word with her, Qiuyi asks her not to say anything. Dressed in a gray robe and with her head shaved, Qiuyi's appearance forms a distinct contrast to that of Xiao'e. After a couple of years, Qiuyi leaves the nunnery, goes back to town, and marries a much older man, a teahouse owner who admires her.

Unlike other women, Qiuyi never says an unnecessary word, so her story is mostly told by the female voice-over that cannot be related to a character on the screen. Jian Xu attributes such a voice to "an authoritative one," which is defined by Mary Ann Doane as follows:

> As a form of direct address, it speaks without mediation to the audience, bypassing the "character" and establishing a complicity between itself and the spectator—together they understand and thus *place* the image. It is precisely because the voice is not localizable, because it cannot be yoked to a body, that it is capable of interpreting the image, producing its truth. (341)

I think *Blush*'s voice-over is not exactly the "authoritative" voice described here. First, it speaks a soft southern dialect in a chatty yet sympathetic tone, which is unfamiliar to Chinese audiences. What they have heard often in films is the kind of authentic and unsympathetic male voice-over, sometimes speaking through a loudspeaker, either recounting history or announcing the current situation of class struggles in flawless Mandarin. Second, by "placing" images for a female voice-over, the male-centered voyeurism in the novella is effectively reduced.

Third, although the voice "cannot be yoked to a body," it does not really "bypass" the characters since it passes on other former prostitutes' gossip, weaves it together in her narrative, and reminds us from time to time that Qiuyi's real thoughts are kept to herself. The film version highlights the relationship between Qiuyi and Lao Pu through these gossips. As the director observes,

> Lao Pu does not realize that Qiuyi's feeling for him is very deep until it is too late. Many people are not clear about their own feelings. Sometimes others see more. [...] When he hears that Qiuyi once had his baby, he is astonished and then loses control. Xiao'e cannot affect him this much. At this moment, we also see how much Qiuyi meant to him. He is suddenly indifferent to other things and thinks of the most stupid way to make it up to Qiuyi. (Zhang Wei and Ying Xiong 231)

Moreover, the complicity between the voice and the imagery is weakened by the camera: more than half of the sequences are shot from a far or medium distance (280 in total) and there are only about 30 close-ups (Wu Qiong 84). Such a camera style resembles that of early Chinese films, but Li Shaohong borrowed it to lend the narrative voice a necessary distance in recounting the story.

There are not many tales like *Blush* that end with the death of the male protagonist for the sake of two anti-heroines who do not seek redemption. Qiuyi's adopting Lao Pu's son is also for herself, since she can no longer have a baby after her miscarriage. What Li Shaohong attempts to reveal through such a story is an exploration of women's choices "when history comes to a crucial moment of changes" and "everyone has to redefine his/her social status" (211). Qiuyi and Xiao'e are marginalized but tougher-than-usual women—but do they really have chances? Many scholars tend to read *Blush* as a melodrama with the historical context of banning prostitution in the background. But what is told by the female voice-over and what is acted out in the foreground—are they not part of the history? I would answer positively.

4.2 Joan Chen's *Xiu Xiu—The Sent-down Girl*

Although the Fifth Generation is *most* eligible to deal with the sent-down experience of educated youths, they have rarely touched the topic. In fact, Chen Kaige's *King of the Children* (1987) and fourth-generation director Zhang Nuanxin's *Sacrificed Youth* (1985) were the only films focusing on this unique period of history before Joan Chen's *Xiu Xiu: The Sent-Down Girl* (1998) was added to the list. Born in the early 1960s, Joan Chen was also too young to remember much about the Cultural Revolution or be sent down to the countryside. Thus her choice of Geling Yan's short story, "Celestial Bath," as the basis for her directorial debut puzzled quite a few Chinese scholars (Sun). Western critics, on the other hand, seemed ready to accept *Xiu Xiu* as another story occurring during the "Chinese orgy of ideological Puritanism known as the Cultural Revolution" (Richards) after watching *Farewell, My Concubine*, *The Blue Kite* and *To Live* (Berardinelli, "Xiu Xiu").

On the surface, *Xiu Xiu* also resembles those fifth-generation fables that embrace "at once a political drama, a love story and a tragic fairy tale" (Langdon). Set in a rather isolated location

with a stunning landscape of Tibetan steppes, the film was shot by Lü Yue, a fifth-generation cameraman who gives every frame an exquisite and polished touch.[12] Like earlier fifth-generation works, *Xiu Xiu* has a rather linear plot and simple dialogues. As for the deeper meaning of the film, critics have various interpretations, but most see it as a haunting tale of innocence lost: a "symbolic presentation of how simple human corruption can topple tenuously constructed idealism" (Krishnan), or a "damning assessment of Mao Zedong's grandiose experiment in mass indoctrination" (Holden "Xiu Xiu"). These readings may be well grounded, but what they have all failed to recognize is *Xiu Xiu*'s courageous and powerful disclosure of a hidden part of history.

Such courage first came from Yan Geling, who wrote "Celestial Bath" based on the experience of a childhood friend who was sent down to a mountain area in Anhui.

> After ten years in the countryside, [her] friend discovered that all the "sent down" students of that region were making their way back home via different relationships. Some came from influential families, with financial or political cache. Young women without such advantageous associations often traded their sexuality. Her friend had slept with several officers who promised that their *friendship* would secure her identification papers and travel permits. [The woman] remained in her exile until China officially reopened the universities in 1977, and her application to attend college in Beijing was accepted. "Afterwards, she told me how she suffered psychologically and physically. There were so many moments she did not want to live," recounts Geling. "But she managed not to lose herself, or to lose her hope. I was only twenty when she told me her story, but it has haunted me all these years."[13]

In "Celestial Bath," Yan sets her story near the Tibetan border and adds the character Lao Jin. The story was written in the early 1990s but is still one of very few works that directly deal with the sexuality issues of sent-down girls. Although during the 1980s educated-youth writers produced many novels and essays on their experiences, it was taboo to include any "sexual content." A few works got past the censor, including Lao Gui's *Bloody Dust* that boldly depicts the sexual anxiety of sent-down boys. Such works were considered extremely controversial and kept away from younger readers. When it comes to sent-down girls' sexual encounters, Zhu Lin and Wang Anyi are among a few female writers who are bold enough to deal with the issue. Male writers also touched the theme in their writings. In his autobiography, Chen Kaige remembers a girl who was separated from other sent-down youths for her "insanity"—she was often heard yelling at night. Later Chen found out from a female friend who accompanied the girl to a physical examination that the girl only yelled when someone was raping her near the Educated-Youth Camp. The incident is still a nightmarish episode in Chen Kaige's memory of the sent-

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[12] Lu Yue won an Oscar for his cinematography of *Shanghai Triad*. Joan Chen also invited Gu Changwei, another fifth-generation cameraman to shoot her first Hollywood project *Autumn in New York* (2000).
[13] See section on "About the Production" in "Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl (1999) – Production Notes," http://movies.yahoo.com/shop?d=hv&id=1800020037&cf=prod

down years. In a Wang Shuo story, there is a character called Han Liting, a back-to-city woman who looks for a husband with an apartment so she may move out of her brother's place. At a birthday party, when people take turns telling the story of their first love, she has no story to tell:

> You think it is not possible? Let me tell you: it is. I was sent down at fourteen and transferred to the army later. When I came back to the city, I was thirty. Who do you think I could love? [...] Well, there were things I could die for: in a way you might say that my first love is this land, this country and our late Chairman Mao... Of course there were men, and I slept with them all the way from the camp to the army for the purpose of coming back to the city. Do you count that as first love? ("No One Cheers" 392)

When this unfortunate woman admits that she lost her virtue *willingly* for the purpose of coming back to the city, those listening to her have nothing to say. The silent reaction of her listeners prevents Han from telling more. Most writers do not intend to go into details, since this period of history is very sensitive and not distant enough. The only way to give justice to such sent-down girls is to expose how they became involved in such a "shameful history." In this sense, Joan Chen does an excellent job telling Xiu Xiu's story in an unsparing manner.

Like most fourth and fifth generation directors, Joan Chen believes that a personal story can only be powerful when it is set against the background of a larger historical crisis (Yan Geling and Joan Chen 40). She opens the film with a sequence showing Xiu Xiu's school and a handsome admirer of hers who cannot take his eyes off her. Hearing about her enrollment in the sent-down program, he comes to give her a kaleidoscope as a parting gift. Xiu Xiu tells him that being sent-down "is like joining the army" while the boy confesses that he has managed to remain in the city. A love story is ended right before it has a chance to unfold. Following the boy's eyes, we see her among hundreds of teenagers saying goodbye to their families and being taken away by army trucks. The boy's voice sets up the narrative of Xiu Xiu's story. Since she never writes to him, he has to put together what he hears and imagines.

After being a model worker for a year in a powered milk plant, Xiu Xiu is chosen to learn herding for six months from a Tibetan nomad, Lao Jin, so that she may lead a girl's cavalry to compete with the famous Iron Girl Cavalry of a nearby farm. Being transferred to the Tibetan border means that she is further isolated from others and she soon finds out that there she has to share everything with Lao Jin: the heavenly landscapes during the day and a worn-out tent during the night. Although she knows that Lao Jin lost his manhood years ago in an accident, Xiu Xiu still seems to be very cautious and uncomfortable with him. The grassland with wild flowers and the night sky with millions of stars please our eyes but not Xiu Xiu's heart, which never stops longing for home: life is harsh in such a place, and even a bath is impossible.

Enchanted by her girlish charm, Lao Jin does most of the hard work besides taking care of Xiu Xiu's meals and water. One fine day, he surprises her with a "basin" of sun-warmed water on a high hill. Xiu Xiu is in ecstasy to have a "celestial bath." While she is bathing, he hums a folk song and guards her. When Xiu Xiu rolls down the flowery steppe and gazes in her kaleidoscope, we find a sequence of harmony between our two characters and between human and nature. The sequence is punctuated by shots that fill the entire screen with magnificent kaleidoscope patterns, as if symbolizing a beauty that is perfect but fleeting, just like Xiu Xiu's innocent charm.

Joan Chen then turns paradise into hell at exactly the happiest moment of Lao Jin's life. When she calculates the 180th day, Xiu Xiu packs her stuff, quits herding, and waits for the Headquarters people to collect her. Leaving the tent with sad feelings, Lao Jin comes back to see her by the tent. He tries to cheer her up, but her mind is on one thing only. Many days have passed and no one comes. A sense of desperation gradually comes over her; she is afraid she will be stranded here forever. A rather handsome peddler suddenly stops by one day and starts a conversation with her. For the first time in six months, she is talking to a man other than Lao Jin. The man tells her that not only the Iron Girl Cavalry has been disbanded, but for many months all educated youths have been fighting for the few return permits for going back to city.

Peddler:	Look, those whose parents have connections or money found their way back first. Certainly, pretty girls like you are mostly gone, too. You must be quite popular at Headquarters?
Xiu Xiu:	I really don't know anyone.
Peddler:	Well… now you know me. If we had met sooner, you'd be back in Chengdu by now, with a job and everything.
Xiu Xiu:	You know people at Headquarters well?
Peddler:	Hell, everyone knows me! Even the chief's dog! They are always begging me for bicycle coupons, laundry detergent coupons, and leather shoes from Shanghai. They've got the power, and I've got the goods. Everyone's happy.
Xiu Xiu:	So are there really only a few permits left?
Peddler:	It's real tight. […] In fact, you're a real honest girl. Anyone with your looks would have visited the ranch chiefs, the committee members, and call them "uncles!" I dislike girls who go through the back door. Okay, come look me up at Headquarters! I will get you what you need!
Xiu Xiu:	Then I really will come looking for you.

Xiu Xiu is startled by what she hears, but immediately regards the peddler as her savior. The man leaves her a red apple, which she hesitates to take at first but then gladly accepts as a token. Lao Jin comes back and observes that they look like they are flirting. In the days afterwards, Xiu Xiu waits for the peddler almost like she is waiting for a lover. When he finally comes back, she

cannot resist his sexual advances hard enough, since she already believes that she has to get help that way.

From this point, the film begins to uncover a "conspiracy theory" shared among men, especially those who have power. Since sent-down girls are not protected and are vulnerable, if one man tricks or forces a girl to give up her virtue, other men would not have much trouble doing the same. Through five different incidents, the director reveals how this theory is put into practice in Xiu Xiu's case. It takes some time before the peddler wins her trust and comes back for her. Once he has had a taste of her, he gives her away. The second man shows up saying that he just sent two girls back: "One word from me, and they're home." Seeing Xiu Xiu getting upset and feeling betrayed, the man tries to persuade her that the peddler is not that bad: "There are things he can't do, so he asked me to help." Xiu Xiu is only briefly resentful before we see the man groaning on top of her, and talking dirty while enjoying his young prey.

The scene is very disturbing, but even more disturbing scenes are still to come. Again, the man leaves Xiu Xiu with nothing but an apple, which she eats in a way that pains Lao Jin to watch. Then, when Lao Jin comes back one day, he sees her teasing a stout man by running around with his belt while the man holds up his pants and begs her to return it. Detecting something in Lao Jin's face, she talks to him for the first time about these men.

Xiu Xiu: The people who visit me are very important.
Lao Jin: How important?
Xiu Xiu: Just very important. If you want to get back to Chengdu, you need these people on your side, stamping documents, writing permits. I'm already late. All the other girls found their way back a year ago. In Chengdu, they've probably been assigned to work units. Think about it. What is a girl to do? No money, no connections, no powerful parents, what have I got but myself? And you can't just sleep with this person and not with that person. The ones you don't sleep with will hold you back. A bowl of water's got to be carried evenly, right?

At this point, we see clearly that Xiu Xiu has totally accepted what the peddler and other men were selling to her. Knowing of how she once got furious with a man who groped her in the movie grounds, and how she was too bashful to undress or bathe while Lao Jin was around, we can feel how desperate she is. She explains the "theory" in such a matter-of-fact way, but, obviously, her naïveté blinds her from seeing who these men are and what they are doing to her.

The most devastating scene occurs after she accepts the conspiracy theory. The fourth man comes in the middle of the night when both Lao Jin and Xiu Xiu are sleeping. Without bothering to greet her or pull the curtain tight, the man grabs Xiu Xiu from her bed and does what he comes for. Lao Jin is burning with anger, but cannot save her, knowing that she is *willing*. He

picks up the leather shoe of the invading man from the ground, examines it, and throws it into the fire. When the beast finishes with his little beauty, Xiu Xiu has to confront Lao Jin about the shoe, since its owner is too important a man to reveal his face. "Whose shoe?" Lao Jin replies. "Why do you care?" Xiu Xiu curses him. After the man leaves, Lao Jin does not go straight to fetch water for her as usual. With no water, she is extremely frustrated. Lao Jin finally says what he wants to say.

Lao Jin:	You are selling yourself, you know that? But it won't do you any good!
Xiu Xiu:	What did you say? (She stares at him.)
Lao Jin:	You are a whore.
Xiu Xiu:	Not for you though.

The vicious tone of Xiu Xiu makes us detest her for a moment, since she is insulting the only decent human being who cares about her. If this episode still seems a little melodramatic, what comes next is the cruelest consequence of the reality: Xiu Xiu is pregnant.

Lao Jin brings her to the Headquarters in hope of finding justice, but she recognizes no one and nobody seems to know her. From this point, the director starts to expose the other side of the conspiracy: the men forget about their promises after using her and the girl has nowhere to turn. It is a one-against-many game from the beginning, and the "one" can never find "justice" with many in a historical period when "truth is with the majority." Instead of helping her, Lao Jin involuntarily exposes her to public humiliation. Even though she loses lots of blood in an abortion roughly performed by two nurses, Xiu Xiu lies quietly and helplessly in a surgery bed, like the sacrificed girl in the Tibetan myth lying on the altar. The mythic heroine, however, is remembered with gratefulness by people, while Xiu Xiu is further insulted by merciless gossips.

Nurse A:	Not a sound from her, huh?
Nurse B:	I'm sure she made plenty sounds when she was screwing around.
Nurse A:	She really knows how to get what she wants. How could she do that to herself?
Nurse B:	A dead pig feels no pain.
Nurse A:	She's the fifth girl this week, and I am not surprised anymore.

The common attitude towards these "fallen angels" during the Cultural Revolution was nothing but contempt: they are the "worn shoes" and why should people care about their feelings? Nobody would have sympathy for her, not even other women.

At the clinic, an intellectual youth nicknamed Zhang Three-toes boasts about his trick of making his way back home. Once he dared to cripple himself, they had to let him go since he could not ride a horse anymore. After hearing the story, Xiu Xiu, the recovered young heroine,

attempts to aim Lao Jin's rifle at her toes. Not being able to shoot herself, she pleads to Lao Jin in a crying tone: "I beg you, Lao Jin. No one helps me, and now I can only count on you. Just help me once and I will be home soon." She kisses him on the lips, but he is heartbroken. When Lao Jin finally aims at her toes, she asks him to wait. She redoes her loose hair plait, puts on her red-aqua scarf, looks at him trustingly, and smiles slightly as if posing for a camera. He suddenly realizes what she wants, raises his gun and ends her life. Lao Jin takes her body to the "celestial bath" place and ends his own life there as well. When snow buries them, the film cuts back to a previous sequence with Xiu Xiu rolling down the flowery steppe. With such a moment of tranquil harmony, Joan Chen completes a film that is haunting, yet "poetic and nostalgic, and classic." The director says that she wants to remind us that there was a time when we believed in the divine, "even though it is just our own concept of divine" (Yan Geling and Joan Chen 22). In order to transcend the reality with a sense of the divine, she lets Xiu Xiu redeem her sin and regain her innocence through death.

Xiu Xiu is a film with many flaws. For instance, many critics point out that Xiu Xiu's admirer is a romantic but unqualified narrator (Sun Shaoyi; Takeshita; Holden, "Xiu Xiu"). Others comment that the film fails to explore more of Xiu Xiu's inner thoughts, which makes people doubt if the original story "was really so overwhelming as it is portrayed" in the film (Schwartz, "Tian Yu"). This is again the problem of history-writing via film languages. Like *Blush*, *Xiu Xiu* was not intended to be a "historical film," but Joan Chen wanted, nevertheless, to expose a part of history that is unknown by, and carefully hidden from, most of us. It is this goal that makes the film a powerful explication from women's perspective—both scriptwriters and the director have already brought in the concerns and viewpoints of women. Joan Chen's poetry of innocence lost is a girl's coming-of-age story in a men's world "devastating in its emotional impact" (Guthmann C1) and its historical weight. I wish Xiu Xiu could have lived to tell her own story, since the events in her brief life serve a powerful feminist and historical moment, but at least Joan Chen and Geling Yan have courageously dealt with her story and explicated it with depth.

I have dealt with both *Blush* and *Xiu Xiu* as female directors' attempt to write her stories on the margins of his/story, but if writing women's stories is a kind of history-writing, then most male directors have done little in this aspect. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter and the conclusion, the Fifth Generation's limitations are obvious when regarding the representation of women and the telling of personal stories. Although they have shaken the cornerstones of Chinese film tradition—literariness, representation of nation, and writing of history, fifth-generation directors have not achieved their original goal of showing more concern for individuals.

Chapter 5 Feminine Consciousness and Problems of Women's Film

As we have demonstrated in previous chapters, Chinese filmmakers and critic-scholars started the self-conscious dialogues around 1980 with norms and conventions that had become deeply rooted in film creation and criticism. Due to the participation of the West, dialogues between the "contemporary self" and the "traditional father" over such issues as literariness, national characteristics, and representation of history in film have been *tripartite negotiations* since the latter part of that decade. The issue of women's film[1] was first raised along with the rise of female directors and the introduction of Western feminism into China around the mid-1980s. Since there was no dialogue among Chinese intellectuals themselves in this particular critical dimension, Western feminist theories played an important role in initiating dialogues concerning women in film, women and film, as well as female directors and feminine consciousness. Such dialogues have continued and have not become tripartite negotiations—after all, it seems impossible to maintain a third or balanced position in gender issues.

What called Western feminist theories into the critical domain was a fact that was, and is, a matter of pride for the Chinese critical circle. According to a survey conducted in 1989, from 1979 to 1989 (or the first decade of the New Era), a total of fifty-nine directors made 182 feature films. In the Shanghai Film Studio, for instance, there were a total of twenty-five directors, of whom six were women (Huang Shuqin, "Women" 120). Over thirty female directors have continued directing since 1989, and more than twenty are among the leading directors of their studios. About a dozen of them are not only well known in China but also winners of various international awards. Many critics point out that, given the man's world that is the film industry, the numbers and achievements of female directors in China are indeed a remarkable phenomenon even in the global context. The phenomenon is also regarded as evidence that Chinese women are among the most liberated in the world, enjoying more rights and higher status than women from most other countries.[2] As Rao Shuoguang and Pei Yali have observed, many critic-scholars in China first turned to Western feminist theories in the unstated hope of testing their long-cherished achievement in women's liberation, but the result was unexpectedly disappointing (266). I will go into details on this point in later discussions.

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[1] Chris Berry translated the Chinese term *nüxing dianying* into "women's cinema" ("Chinese 'Women's Cinema'"). I will use "women's film" instead, given that Chinese scholars also use the term to refer to individual film works.

[2] For detailed information on working female directors, see Yang Yuanying's "Introduction" in her edited book entitled *Her Voices: Accounts of Female Chinese Directors*, and Dai Jinhua's discussions in the section of "Gender and Narrative" in her *Landscape in the Mist: Chinese Film Culture 1978-1998*.

In 1986, the China Film Art Research Center and the editorial of *Contemporary Cinema* organized the "Retrospective Symposium on Female Directors' Works in the New Era," during which many female directors and critic-scholars expressed their views concerning female directors and women's film. Some rejected the notion of "women's film," saying that the very expression revealed discrimination against women by assuming that film was an art for men. Others maintained that "women's film" was a Western term derived from feminist studies, and thus not applicable in China's socialist cultural context. Concerning the definition of women's film, some thought that it mainly referred to films about women and children, which female directors could handle better than men.[3] Most scholars agreed that only films showing "feminine consciousness" could be called women films. As for the definition of "feminine consciousness," scholars suggested that it had to do with women's specific gender/psychological experience, their social roles and status, as well as their values, which had been influenced by Confucian culture, feudal ethics, and Communist teaching. Almost all participants admitted that female and male directors preferred different types of female characters while showing different understandings of them.[4]

Since the symposium, Chinese scholars have re-evaluated representations of women in Chinese film. This chapter will first examine how women's images, voices, and perspectives have been constructed in Chinese films by both male and female directors, and then explore possible means for making a women's film. My discussions in this chapter will go beyond the Fifth Generation more so than previous chapters, since although it has shaken the three cornerstones of Chinese film tradition—literariness, nation, and history—it has revealed its limitations in breaking through the norms in cinematic representations of women.

1. Women's Story, Men's Film

Compared to Hollywood or any other national cinema, Chinese cinema contains a larger proportion of repertoires with female characters at the center: all generations of directors have portrayed many unforgettable heroines. The pervasive presence of women's images on the silver screen, however, cannot cover up the absence of "real women" or "feminine consciousness" in most films, especially those by male directors. It is not fair to say that female characters in

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[3] Many female directors' first assignments from their studios were children's films. Fourth-generation directors Wang Junzheng, Shi Xiaohua, Wang Haowei, and Guang Chunlan have all won international awards for their children's films.

[4] See *Contemporary Cinema* reporters' review titled "Female Directors and Women's Film" in *China Film Yearbook*, 1987, 8/45-48.

Chinese films have been created as mere objects of visual pleasure, but most of them express the ideological ideal of their male creators—be it anti-feudalism or pro-communism, be it a return to, or a departure from, traditional values.

In Chinese films made before 1949, female characters were either traditional mothers, daughters, and wives, or women who stepped out of their families in order to make a living. Films by second-generation directors, notably the leftist directors, portrayed women as victims of wars, poverty, feudal values, and malpractice of the bad society at the time. These forerunners of Chinese film revealed great sympathy towards women as the most oppressed in the patriarchal order. Ruan Lingyu, one of the most accomplished stars of China's silent-film era of the 1930s, and who was known as the Greta Garbo of China, had played many roles of good women who often fell into such desperate situations as poverty, sickness, and/or prostitution.

In a representative film of the time, *New Woman* (1934) by Cai Chusheng, Ruan Lingyu plays a good-looking music teacher, Wei Ming, a "new woman" with a decent job and a talent for writing. Her manuscript for a novel entitled *Tomb of Love* is being considered for publication. From a sequence in the publication house, we see that the chief editor first rejects her manuscript without even reading it. Once he discovers that the author is a pretty woman, however, he agrees to publish the book with her photo on it. One day, Wei Ming runs into a former girlfriend and her husband, Dr. Wang, who happens to be a member of Wei Ming's school board. He asks Wei for a date; when rejected, he uses his influence to have her fired. Losing her modest salary and unable to receive any remuneration, she quickly falls into a difficult financial situation. When her sister brings Wei Ming's sick daughter (the child of a former lover who had abandoned her when she became pregnant) to Shanghai, she is too poor to pay for the girl's treatment. Wei Ming is then talked into selling herself for one night. When she finds out that the man waiting there is Dr. Wang, she leaves in anger. Dr. Wang then tells the paparazzi about seeing Wei Ming in a brothel. Unable to bear the humiliation soon followed by her daughter's death, she commits suicide.

The story of *New Woman* was based on the real-life incident of actress Ai Xia's suicide after tabloids had ruined her reputation. Shortly after the completion of the film, Ruan Lingyu herself fell victim to news media that sensationalized her illicit affair with a rich merchant. She killed herself before turning twenty-five, devastating her tens of thousands of fans, who "attended her funeral procession in the city." The event was reported by the *New York Times* (Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei 293). Even though Ruan Lingyu enjoyed a very successful career, she was unable to protect herself in a society hostile to women. After playing rape victims in at least

two movies and committing suicide four times on the screen, Ruan Lingyu's death served to criticize society more severely than any of her films had.[5]

In 1992, Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan, who is best known for his women's films in a cinema glorifying male bonding and masculinity, made a biographical picture, *Center Stage* (*The Actress*), about Ruan Lingyu's public and private life—*The Actress*. At the beginning of the film, we see a close-up of Maggie Cheung while hearing the director voice's telling her that Ruan Lingyu began her career with a number of "vase" (decoration) roles. Maggie smiles, "So she was like me!"—a simple statement that makes a feminist moment in the film.[6]

Ruan Lingyu's roles constituted a rather realistic representation of women of the time. When the third-generation began directing films after 1949, women were again used as the most oppressed "class" within the proletariat to denounce the "old society." From 1949 to 1978, both in reality and in films by Zhang Shuihua, Xie Jin, and Cui Wei, Chinese women were given a real chance to become "new women." The first film to narrate the fate of a woman with a double focalization of present and past was Zhang Shuiha's *The White Haired Woman* (1950), which was based on a stage musical performed by military artistic groups everywhere in China around 1949. The film's subsequent ballet version became one of the eight model plays during the Cultural Revolution.

The story is about Xi'er, the daughter of a poor peasant named Yang Bailao, who is in love with her neighbor, Da Chun. Xi'er's father and Da Chun's mother hope to marry them after the fall harvest. The local landlord, Huang Shiren, is interested in Xi'er. On New Year's Eve, he uses the debt Yang owes him as leverage and forces Yang to sign a paper contracting Xi'er as a maid. Too ashamed to face his daughter, Yang commits suicide. With the help of another of Huang's maidservants, Xi'er escapes into the mountains and lives in a cave. In order to survive, she steals the sacrificial offerings from a temple. Nonetheless, her beautiful black hair turns completely white. In her shabby clothes, the once pretty girl now resembles a ghost. Da Chun, who had been driven out of the village by Huang and joined the Communist army, comes back as an officer and liberates the tenants from Huang's oppression. The lovers are reunited, and the evil landlord executed.

The film's theme was summarized by a statement quoted everywhere: "The old society turned a person into a ghost, but the new society would change a ghost back into a person" (Dai

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[5] For a more detailed account of this historical incident and related discussions, see Kristine Harris, "*The New Woman* Incident: Cinema, Scandal, and Spectacle in 1935 Shanghai"; Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons: Shanghai Silent Film as Vernacular Modernism"; Michael G. Chang, "The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful: Movie Actresses and Public Discourse in Shanghai, 1920s-1930s."

[6] Winning a Silver Bear at the 1993 Berlinale, Maggie Cheung is much luckier than Ruan Lingyu.

Jinhua *Landscape* 92). As an exemplary text among all revolution classics, the story of *The White Haired Woman* had a great impact in China. Chinese people over sixty years of age still remember how the stage drama touched its audiences so deeply that they forgot they were watching a play and threw stones at Huang Shiren. (Such a spectacle is revealed in Li Shaohong's *Blush*, where Lao Pu plays the role of Huang Shiren in his factory's performance. When an angry audience calls out the slogan "Down with the landlord Huang Shiren," Lao Pu also joins the audience in calling out the slogan. As one of the eight model plays—the only plays allowed to be performed during the Cultural Revolution—the ballet version was familiar to many of those growing up in the 1960s and 1970s. The film version has reached more audiences than did the musical and ballet versions, due to the special advantage of the film medium. The film was shown even in remote rural areas and minority regions. Yang Liping's *Sun Bird* (1997) reveals how, during a screening in a minority region, the projector operator had to interpret lines (originally in Mandarin) into the local language. The narrative mode—including the plot structure and the characterization—of *The White Haired Woman* became a fundamental norm in the representation of women in the revolution film genre.

Such a narrative mode was polished and reached its perfection in Xie Jin's *The Red Detachment of Woman* (1961), another revolution classic portraying how a slave woman became a Communist soldier. Set in the tropical Hainan Island, the film opens when the heroine Qionghua becomes enslaved by the evil landlord Nan Batian, who has killed her father. After yet another failed escape attempt, Qionghua is beaten up by Nan's men and put into a water prison. Hong Changqing, a Communist officer disguised as a rich overseas merchant, notices her when he passes the area controlled by Nan. Pretending to do business with Nan, Hong wins Nan's trust and manages to ask Qionghua to be his maidservant. When Hong asks her, "Where is your home?" Qionghua answers that she does not have one. Then Hong points a way for her. Qionghua becomes a soldier in a female detachment of the Red Army led by Hong. Too eager to seek revenge, the armed Qionghua attacks Nan at an inappropriate moment, getting herself injured while putting her comrades in danger. Through Hong's teaching, she recognizes her mistake and learns to "transform her personal hatred into class solidarity." After Nan has murdered Hong, she takes over his leadership of the detachment and carries on the battle (Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei 279). Recognized as another exemplary revolution classic, a ballet version of the film was made in 1971, which was also a model play.

The Red Detachment of Women also had great impact through updating the image of women, by having actress Zhu Xijuan play the role of Qionghua. Many senior Chinese still remember their first impression of Zhu's face: her "eyes, lips, and cheekbones seemed to contain

an explosive power," and her distinctive facial features would never get expressions of love and hatred confused (Qiu Tiancao 76). Xie Fang, who played leading roles in another Xie Jin film—*Stage Sisters* (1965)—also had the kind of face that would never get lost in a crowd of women. Both Xie Fang and Zhu Xijuan had a healthy and determined look that was in sharp contrast with the image of Ruan Lingyu.

While there was a love story between Qionghua and Hong Changqing in the original script of *Detachment*, after several revisions, the element was almost invisible in the final cut (Li Yiming, "Xie Jin" 14; Wang Hui, "Politics" 27). Love was a forbidden theme during the period (1949-78), and all personal desires—material, emotional, and sexual—were considered indecent. Although the film posed Qionghua in Hong's gaze before he saves her, the narrative effectively eliminated male *desire* from the gaze.[7] In other words, revolution films treat proletarian men and women as sons and daughters of the same Father—the Communist Party (Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 95). Even so, there are still traces of the patriarchal order in the narratives of both *Detachment* and *Stage Sisters*. In both films, revolution saves the heroines from the old oppressive power relationships, only to place them into another power relationship, where they will be willingly enlightened (Wang Hui, "Politics" 24-25). In this sense, Ye Daying's *Red Lovers* (1998) is a rare example that reverses this order by having Jin follow his wife into the conviction of revolution.

As Dai Jinhua observes, no other third-generation director can be compared to Xie Jin, who "has masterfully used women's images and stories in composing the leitmotif of both history and politics" in different historical periods ("History" 63). When the ban on "love" was lifted after the Cultural Revolution, Xie Jin immediately enjoyed a new round of popularity by configuring idealized women who performed the duties of both good wife and wise mother, giving comfort to male protagonists doomed during political disasters. While Xie Jin continued to represent women as men's spiritual companions, fourth-generation male directors introduced women as objects of desire and recipients of violence in their stories.[8]

In Yang Yanjin's *Narrow Street* (1981), for instance, a man named Xia tells the story of Yu, a girl whose hair was cut off and thus who had no choice but to pretend to be a boy. Xia and Yu become friends by accident, and for a while, Xia treats Yu like a shy little brother. Once Xia finds out Yu's true gender and her frustration, the two begin to share the desire of restoring her girl-like appearance. Unable to buy a wig for Yu (since wigs are sold only to drama troops as props), Xia attempts to steal one from the backstage of an open-air theatre. Xia succeeds, but thinks better of his actions, and puts the wig back. At this moment, he is caught as a thief and

[7] Many Chinese scholars borrow concepts and terms such as "objects of male desire/gaze" from Laura Mulvey in their analyses of the representation of women.

beaten so badly that he almost loses his sight. When he comes out of the hospital, he can no longer locate Yu. Xia then tells the story to a film director (played by Yang Yanjin himself), and the two imagine three possible endings for Yu. *Narrow Street* was a perfect example of fourth-generation narrative which often told "small stories" in "big time," namely, depicting personal experiences with a dramatic historical moment in the background (Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 138).

This is also true in other fourth-generation films about women of the past, where they were revealed as beautiful sacrifices in the process of human civilization. In many ways, fourth-generation male directors' representations of women resemble those of early films, where "erotically coded scenes would appear to satisfy the spectator's possible fantasies about seduction, even rape," as in the cases of *Good Woman* (1985) by Huang Jianzhong, and *A Girl from Hunan* (1986) by Xie Fei and Wu Lan. "Such explicit sexuality," E. Ann Kaplan observed, "was unthinkable during the Cultural Revolution, and even in the late 1970s" ("Melodrama" 20). In these male directors' narratives, women again become the object of sympathy and the victim of the traditional values that they want to criticize. In their films, even those strong-willed women "who could go a little too far," like Huniu in *Camel Xiangzi* (1982) and Xiang Ersao in *Woman from the Lake of Scented Soul* (1992) would normally not leave or completely break away with the family into which they had married (Zhang Guangkun 49).

Fifth-generation male directors have portrayed many female characters with modern mentalities in a historical setting. Women in the films by Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Zhou Xiaowen, and Li Shaohong that we have discussed are all frankly posed as objects of male desire, and these women all know how to trade on their sexuality. The star of many Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige films, Gong Li's image has become a trademark of fifth-generation films. Gong Li's face is neither as delicate as Ruan Lingyu's nor as distinctive as Zhu Xijuan's, but many of her roles involve an oppressed woman daring to rebel with the power of a primitive passion. Her shapely body, dressed up by fifth-generation designers, has never failed to attract the eyes of audiences everywhere. The following passage is a Western critic's description of her role as a club singer and the mistress of the master of a gang in *Shanghai Triad* (1995):

> Decked out in red feathers from head to chorus-girl legs, she looks like a walking ideogram, reading "soft, quivery, hot." "What a slut!" laughs a bumptious gangster, deriding the character. "What a star!" the audience marvels, thinking of Gong Li. She launches into the first of the movie's Thirties-style production numbers, and as she does so, Gong Li seems to take on the persona that critics have long imputed to her: Dietrich to Zhang's Josef von Sternberg. (Klawans 11-12)

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[8] See also Gina Marchetti's "*Two Stage Sisters*: The Blossoming of a Revolutionary Aesthetic."

For many audiences, there has to be an actress before the film is enjoyable. In Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum*, *Ju Dou*, *Raise the Red Lantern*, *The Story of Qiuju*, and *Shanghai Triad*, the camera always lingers around, or gazes at, Gong Li, encouraging audiences to identify with her role. Some scholars equate such camera focus with a woman's perspective and praise it as a way of rethinking traditional culture (Song Guizhen 43); others disagree by pointing out that the woman is only the object of the male gaze and male desire (Liu Xufeng 33).

Regardless of whether it is Jiu'er of *Red Sorghum*, Xiao Jinbao of *Shanghai Triad*, Ruyi of *Temptress Moon*, or Yueyang of *The Emperor's Shadow*, these women's "desire to desire"—to borrow Mary Ann Doane's term—is in fact their male creators' desire to desire, that is, the ultimate liberation of self. When asked why his films always focus on women, Zhang Yimou has given various answers, such as: "women bear a heavier burden than men" (M. Yang 300), and "the novelists do a better job depicting women, who are usually more complicated than male characters" (An Gangqiang 39). In my understanding, this world-class director, who became China's cultural hero in the 1990s, has been successful partially because he has held on to the age-old "Chinese tradition of using women to talk about other things" (Silbergeld 140). As Rey Chow points out, the "woman's body becomes the living ethnographic museum. [...] putting 'Chinese culture' on display" in Zhang Yimou films ("Primitive Passion" 47). "While women's stories are used to eulogize/criticize, their images to reveal and their voices to testify [...] the very concept/essence of 'woman,' like 'China,' is that ultimately idealized object, that something that does not really exist" (46).

Chen Kaige might seem to configure women in a different way, but that is only because when "male narcissism" comes in, there is even less room for female subjectivity in the national culture (Chow, "Male Narcissism" 327-59). After his success with *Farewell, My Concubine* (1993), which has intrigued many scholars for its reflections on the problematic issue of gender, Chen Kaige wanted to express a "mild feminism" and so recruited Wang Anyi, a famous woman writer, when writing the script of *Temptress Moon* (1995). In their collaboration, however, Wang Anyi found Chen neither "mild" nor "feminist," observing that he accepted "the perspectives of feminists, homosexuals, and loners," because he was "not afraid of going to extremes. He threw himself out of the center, so he could face a wasted land [...] and then build up a whole new world" (Wang Anyi 21). Although Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* and *Farewell, My Concubine* were welcomed by some feminist scholars,[9] he could not really accept a woman's perspective when it was in conflict with his, which made the writing of *Temptress Moon* a torture to Wang Anyi.

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[9] See Mary Ann Farquhar's "The 'Hidden' Gender in Yellow Earth", Wendy Larson's "The Concubine and the Figure of History: Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine*", and Bonnie S. Mcdougall's "Cross-Dressing

> Chen Kaige makes it very clear: he is finally dealing with love. [...] He wants a woman to shoulder this task, because he thinks that women have more reasons to love: love could be her weapon to challenge this world. [...] This love has to bloom to the fullest and indicates a dangerous fullness on the edge. That is why he has to choose the 1920s to be the background of this love: it was a break China had between wars and chaos, some things had had a result, while other things were just about to begin. (13-14)

We can see that women, according to Chen Kaige's way of thinking, function as a symbolic concept with its own extreme qualities, which is why both Ruyi and Lady Zhao seem utterly unreal.

A film by a male fifth-generation director that attempts to reflect the psychology of both genders and their relationship is Zhou Xiaowen's *The Price of Frenzy* (1987). The entire film is constructed around a "rape." The rapist is a jobless young man and the victim a twelve-year-old girl, orphaned Lanlan, while the "frenzied" woman is Lanlan's older sister Qingqing, who is determined to seek revenge. Without knowing it, both sisters are posed in the vision of the rapist, who keeps watching them behind a pair of binoculars from a tower. Qingqing begins her task by taking pictures of drivers in the street, under the mistaken assumption that the rapist is a driver. As she becomes increasingly obsessed with her search, she also loses her sensitivity to the feelings of Lanlan and her boyfriend, which are depicted to indicate her departure from what is generally considered part of "femininity." When she eventually does meet the rapist in the tower, which is surrounded by the police, she kicks him off the tower when he surrenders, completing her task by violence—the very thing she has been fighting against.

The film text, as both Lu Tonlin and Elissa Rashkin observe, has elements that make it a typical text for a feminist reading: male gaze, impotent female gaze, women's hysterical screams, sexual segregation and fear, and so forth (Lu Tonglin, "How" 64-68). Western scholars are tempted to interpret the film conveniently with "terminology and concepts borrowed from Western feminist theory," even though they are aware that the film has its specific historical and social context in contemporary China (Rashkin 115). The mainland scholar Yin Hong sees the film as the first to break away "from the rational and conscious understanding of human beings in Chinese cinema. It explores the irrational and unconscious" aspects in men's and women's psychology (qtd. in Lu Tonglin, "How" 63). The psychological focus enables Zhou Xiaowen to make his female characters believable, even though the film still seems to imply the cliché that "women are longing for rape" (Ge Hua, "A Taichi Matrix" 358-59). Instead of blaming women's

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and Disappearing Woman in Modern Chinese Fiction, Drama and Film: Reflections on Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine*." *China Information*, 8.4 (1994): 42-51.

problems on men, the film depicts the rapist also as a victim of a problematic society. Growing up in an all-male environment where he has been exposed to pornography, this sexually repressed young man destroys the innocence of a girl and has to pay the price for another woman's frenzy.

From the above analysis, we can see that although the Fifth Generation has shaken all three cornerstones of the Chinese film tradition by re-interpreting literariness, nation, and history, its limitations are found in the representation of women. Given that fifth-generation male directors' rebellion has been largely against the revolution norm, what they have changed in the representation of women does little but repeat their roles as the object of desire. If, by eliminating desire from the male gaze, the revolution film narrative has reduced the degree of confrontation between the two genders, the move by male fifth-generation directors has also restored such confrontation. The fact that almost all women in male directors' films are idealized or symbolized has always been one of the reasons female directors put forward to challenge their limitations.

2. Female Directors, Feminine Consciousness, and Stories of the Other Woman

As I mentioned previously, China has more female directors than almost any other country, but they have yet to produce a good number of works that qualify as women's films. Before 1949, Xie Caizhen was the only female director to make a film—*Song of an Orphan* (*Guchu Beisheng*), produced in 1925. Scholars usually exclude her from their discussion. Chinese female directors are often divided into three generations: the older, the middle-aged, and the younger generation (Yang Yuanying 28), respectively equivalent to the third, fourth, and fifth generations. The reason for such a division is to stress a linear relationship among female directors as an independent entity. The older generation includes Wang Ping and Dong Kena, while a majority of middle-aged female directors belong to the Fourth Generation: Wang Haowei, Zhang Nuanxin, Huang Shuqin, Wang Junzheng, Shi Shujun, Guang Chunlan, Xiao Guiyun, Qin Zhiyu, and Bao Zhifang, among others. The younger generation, or the Fifth Generation, includes five female directors—Li Shaohong, Hu Mei, Liu Miaomiao, Peng Xiaolian, and Ning Ying.[10]

New China's first female director, Wang Ping (1916-90), was once a school teacher like Wei Ming in *New Woman*. She lost her job for taking "the lead role in a Chinese adaptation of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*." Supported by some leftists, she acted in a number of leftist films. Wang Ping then married a leading leftist intellectual, "worked as an underground contact in Shanghai,"

[10] Like most fifth-generation members, Ning Ying entered the Beijing Film Academy, but she left for Italy in 1981 to learn filmmaking under Bertolucci. She did not make her first feature until 1990, and that is why some scholars have called her a post-fifth-generation director, while others consider her in the line of sixth-generation directors who began their career in the early 1990s.

and was rewarded with "a director position in the film division of the army's political department" after 1949 (Zhang Yingjing and Xiao 352). Her life experience, in many ways, served as a testimony of how a woman was given a new life by the Communists. Wang Ping's repertoire is impressive, including *Story of Liubao Village* (1957), *The Everlasting Radio Signals* (1958), *Locust Tree Village* (1962), and *Sentinels under the Neon Lights* (1964), as well as two stage musicals she co-directed—*The East Is Red* (1965) and *Song of the Chinese Revolution* (1990). She was not only a mainstream director, but also a master of the revolution film narrative. In her films (just as in her life), the relationship between husband and wife, or male and female lovers, was always a relationship between a leader and a follower, for whom revolution and love were two concepts in one. Wang Ping's heroes were always the physical incarnation of the Communist Party in various forms, and marrying them was without doubt the best chance for the heroines to achieve ultimate liberation (Yang Yuanying 31).

Another female director of the older generation, Dong Kena (1930-), has made over twenty films, most of which focus on stories of women. Born and raised in a traditional Chinese family that regarded men as superior to women, Dong has always had concerns about women's fate (Jin Fenglan 46-48). Today's feminist scholars do not recognize her films as women's films, since her female characters all follow male role-models and are eager to be recognized as men's equals, but her devotion to telling women's stories is worthy of praise. For a number of years, Dong Kena and Wang Ping were rare examples of female directors. As a "superwoman," Dong proved that she could be a good mother and wife while working as a director, which was considered impossible by most people (Dong Kena 16). In the New Era, she joined the wave of "women's film" by making several films about unconventional career women, who make their own choices in work and in their love lives, between the traditional and the ideal. In this sense, she has gone one step further than Wang Ping.

Critics have recognized the lyrical and elegant quality present in the film language of Wang Ping and Dong Kena, but Dai Jinhua has pointed out that such criticisms have covered up the true story behind both their films and their lives, namely, a story revealing the so-called Mulan complex.[11] As China's first leading female director, Wang Ping did not establish a women's film tradition, but she did set an example for later female directors in China by proving that a woman could do a man's job better than men. According to Dai Jinhua, this Mulan

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[11] Mulan was a girl who took her elderly father's place on the battlefield when foreign armies invaded China. She demonstrated great bravery in combat and returned home covered in glory. When her friends in the army later dropped by to visit, they were all surprised to see her in girl's attire. Mulan's story was made into a Disney animation in 1997. Chinese legends offer several stories about talented women who achieved

complex has been shared by not only female Chinese directors but also superwomen in other professions—they take pride in, and receive recognition for, being able to do whatever men can do (*Landscape* 151). This phenomenon has led scholars to re-evaluate Mao's liberation of women in a new light.

A prominent feminist scholar in China, Li Xiaojiang, observes that before 1949 "the fight for women's rights in China had pointed to feudalism instead of men," and thus women's emancipation has been carried out by both men and women along "the track of national revolution." After 1949, most Chinese did not think it was necessary to continue women's emancipation, "since women were already liberated" (*Gender* 5-6). Dai Jinhua extends Li Xiaojiang's observation into the cultural context, indicating further that in the May Fourth alliance of progressive young men and women, the male intellectuals were the main fighters. Once Mao granted liberation to women and enforced the protection of women's rights by law, women were treated as men's equals and their gender was temporarily forgotten during the seventeen-year period, when they willingly followed the same rules made by/for men (*Landscape* 115).

Even today, some male intellectuals in China still reflect upon the oppression of women as they examine issues of humanity, following the May Fourth tradition. For this reason, in Mainland China, there are not only male directors who specialize in making films about women, but also male scholars who take an active part in women's studies, as well as male critics who have been promoting women's writings.[12] Meanwhile, there are many female directors who do not feel any need "to speak for women" through their works (Wu Guanping, "Experiencing" 112). "Why should I make 'women's film'?" some female directors ask. "Men and women are all alike. I want to make war movies and epic films" (Berry, "Interview with Hu Mei" 37). They refuse to put a gender mark on their works, while attempting to show a "broader" concern for humanity by producing films with historical or thematic significance.

Among fourth-generation female directors, Wang Haowei is the most accomplished of Wang Ping's successors, who have produced quite a few leitmotif films revealing her skillful mastery of the mainstream narrative mode (Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 152). Zhang Nuanxin (1940-95), who established herself through two works on women, gradually lost the feminine perspective in films while attempting to reflect the "broader issues" of society. In her words, she

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great things disguised as men, stories of extremely rare circumstances, since women were not allowed to leave their homes.

[12] Several book series of women's writing have been published during the past decade. Interestingly, the chief editors of these series are all male. Wang Meng, a famous writer and former Minister of Culture, for instance, is the chief editor for *The Red Poppy Series* published by Hebei Education Press in 2000.

spoke "as an artist," and art should not "have a gender" (Wu Guanping, "Experiencing" 112). In the Fifth Generation, Ning Ying openly expresses a lack of interest in making a woman's film: "If a woman interests me and I make a film about her, it is because she is a 'person' and not because she is a 'woman'" (Huang Aihe 286). Li Shaohong was also regarded as an "unwomanly" female director, since both of her first two features—*Silver Snake Murder* (1988), a psychological film about a perverted young man's crime, and *Bloody Dawn* (1990), a Chinese version of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by García Márquez—depicted disturbing violence. Her later films, including *Family Portrait* (1992) and *Red Suit* (1997), just like Ning Ying's *For Fun* (1995) and *On the Beat* (1997), have demonstrated the fifth-generation female director's ability to represent contemporary China by focusing on ordinary people in a rather realistic style.

The concept of women's film was proposed along with the first, and so far only, wave of films about women from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, during which images of the "other woman" appeared. As Chen Xiaoyun and Chen Yuxin point out,

> Different from male directors, female directors have depicted women as "the other sex" instead of "the second sex": women are not merely wives and mothers, but also have their values as independent beings. Female directors' works have revealed more concerns about women's condition, psychology, emotion, desire, and longing. These films often focus on women's love and marriage, challenging the male centered ideology and deconstructing traditional cultural values while carrying forward a feminine consciousness. (204)

Representative works produced during the period include the following: Huang Shuqin's *Woman Demon Human* (1987), Bao Zhifang's *Golden Nails* (1988), Wang Junzheng's *The First Woman in the Mountains* (1986) and *Woman Taxi Woman* (1990), Qin Zhiyu's *Single Woman* (1990), Dong Kena's *Who Is the Third Will* (1990), and so forth. Female protagonists in these films are not "good women" in a traditional sense. Compared to the idealized women configured by male directors, these "unworthy daughters" are rebels against social taboos who tend to choose to be exiled from the family, in order to search for their own "spiritual paradise" (Fan Zhizhong 52).

After the initial excitement with these new images of women, critic-scholars were disappointed at not being able to find distinctive women's voices in these films. Many feminist scholars think that these films are unworthy of the name "women's film," since they have neither provided a satisfactory venue for their female characters or offered a powerful critique of the compromises women always have to make (Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 156-58). These films' criticism of loveless marriages, however, has encouraged many women to make their own decisions in their own interest, rather than being trapped forever in the invisible prison of public opinion, which is heavily influenced by traditional values.

In Zhang Nuanxin's acclaimed *Sacrificed Youth* (1986), for instance, female protagonist Li Chun's voice-over speaks as she tries to recollect memories of both her lost youth and her lost femininity in a village of a Dai minority region, where she was sent down as an educated youth. Witnessing differences between the civilized and the primitive—sometimes as the distorted and the natural—Li Chun finds the village a totally different world. Although she has more education than anyone in the village, Dai girls on her team refuse to be her friend simply because her gray uniform is ugly. When the granny with whom she stays gives her a Dai girl's skirt, she puts it on in delight and soon attracts the attention of both a Han educated youth and a capable Dai man.

> While it is the autonomy of the Dai girls that challenges Li Chun's sense of cultural supremacy, her superficial assimilation to Dai culture has brought immense rewards and indeed enables her to regain that centrality [...] and capture the erotic power newly discovered when she discards the Maoist uniforms. (Yau, "Is China the End of Hermeneutics" 131-32)

Once Li Chun returns to the city, she no longer enjoys the attention she once did, and thus the nostalgic sentiment of "everything left me" that is shared by many fourth-generation directors concludes this could-be-unique story into another small story of a big time. Li Chun might have found her lost femininity superficially for a moment, but she would shortly lose it again, since director Zhang Nuanxin did not intend to pursue it.

Taking part in many women's film festivals abroad, Zhang Nuanxin obtained recognition for her films, including *Drive to Win* (1981)—a film about a female volley ball player "who loves honor more than life"—and *Sacrificed Youth*. She found it hard to accept Western feminist ideas such as "we should present women's desire," or "we should reject men's desire towards women" (Wu Guanping, "Experiencing" 108). She told her Western colleagues that she had grown up in a special time when gender difference was not an issue (109), which is quite true. When asked why her earlier films bore a more feminine quality than later ones, she said it was a shift from more personal experiences to a more social-oriented concern (108). Contrary to Virginia Woolf's stories, in which becoming an artist is paralleled by becoming a woman, Zhang Nuanxin's story reveals how a female artist's gender could gradually be undone.

Compared to most fourth-generation female directors, fifth-generation female directors (with the exception of Ning Ying) responded to the idea of women's film in a totally different manner. Peng Xiaolian thinks that being true to oneself includes being true to one's gender and experience. As an unfortunate educated youth who was sent down for nine years, she finds "nostalgic films about sent-down experiences in the countryside like *Sacrificed Youth* [...] very false" (Berry, "Interview with Peng Xiaolian" 26). When asked what "women's film" is, Peng Xiaolian answers as follows:

> [A women's film is] not just that it's about women, and that it's made by a woman; it also has to be obvious that the film was made by a woman. I think a "women's film" should obviously be an expression of a woman's psychology. [...] I don't believe the traditional weak image of Chinese women is what women are. I can't stand that. I don't think there's anything beautiful about that at all. (29-31)

While watching her *Women's Story* (1987) during a screening session, a man (who did not know her) sitting beside Peng said to her at the end of the show, "This is for sure made by a woman!" When Peng asked why, he said that a male director would not make women look as bad as in the scenes where women were covered with mud, and also male directors could not possibly think of the conversations in the film (31).

The youngest member of the Fifth Generation, Liu Miaomiao, who lost her father when she was nine year old, finds that men are always "absent" in her films, since she cannot capture their spirit (Shen Yun 253). Her second feature, *Women on the Long March* (1987), is by no means a traditional revolution film. While Wang Ping's films have told us how "revolution" gave Chinese women a chance to liberate themselves, Liu Miaomiao's film is about eight female soldiers of the Red Army, who are "abandoned" by the main troops in the long march just before they enter the snow mountains. Not knowing that the commander had deliberately sent them off on a task so they would not suffer the difficult conditions or hold the troop back, these eight women try everything to catch up with the main troops. Liu Miaomiao said:

> I was attracted to their conviction, to the beauty that they themselves did not understand. Just think about it, the youngest Red Army soldier at the time was only ten years old. Audiences were touched in Italy last year, seeing it as a war without blood and between men and themselves. These eight women were abandoned by their troop, but they tried to catch up, to pursue their ideal. In the end, some died, but others finally found the troop. (253-4)

This may be a different representation of the Long March and an another untold part of history. As Liu Miaomiao realized, these women were actually changing into men during the process (253), a comment echoing Huang Shuqin's on *Woman Demon Human*.

Li Shaohong once described her experience at the Fourth World Women's Conference (Beijing) in 1995, where a Chinese woman who had lived in the West for some years asked the participants in a seminar on film/television art this question: "Can the red detachment of women do without Hong Changqing?" Audiences were stirred. "All women who received socialist education criticized her as a representative of the capitalists: 'How could an individual be liberated, if the society is not?' I think our sisters got her wrong. I understand her question this way: Must women's liberation depend on men? Can we do it without men?" From the reaction of the audiences in the above

passage, we can tell how deeply rooted socialist education has been. Li Shaohong apparently received the message differently. When she heard a scholar saying that "our history so far has been written by men, and women have been in the position of being written," she felt excited. "We can rewrite the history? And our history?" (202). With *Blush*, Li Shaohong has already taken a solid step in that direction.

3. How Can A Woman Tell Her Own Story

In this section, I will read three works worthy of the name of "women's film": *Army Nurse* (1984), *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987), and *The Sun Bird* (1997). *Army Nurse* was the first film by a fifth-generation female director, Hu Mei, which appeared around the same time as *Yellow Earth*, and before the late-1980s wave of women's film. Chris Berry's interview with the director, and E. Ann Kaplan's readings of the film, introduced this "first women's film in China" to Western academia long after it had been recognized in Chinese film circles for its distinct feminine sensibility (Hu Mei 183). The only film that all scholars in China—including radical feminist scholars—have no problem calling a "woman's film," however, is a film by a fourth-generation female director less well-known in the West: Huang Shuqin's *Woman Demon Human* (1987). Many books on contemporary Chinese film culture have discussed this film as a rare case of women's film. The third film I will discuss, *The Sun Bird*, is a work by one of China's most famous contemporary dancers—an outsider to the film profession. The film was made in 1997 and has not yet received due attention from either Chinese or Western film/culture scholars. In my opinion, the film not only shares traits with both *Army Nurse* and *Woman Demon Human*, but also stands as a unique text challenging Han Chinese artists' understanding of femininity.

When read together, these three films construct a "complete story" about Chinese women—Han and minority, ordinary and extraordinary. What I hope to answer through the following examination is not what stories these films tell, but rather the question of how the stories are told. How can a woman tell her story, so that she can restore what she has heard, seen, and felt without trying to justify her experiences through patriarchal ideas?

3.1 Hu Mei's *Army Nurse* (1984)

Based on female writer Ding Xiaoqi's debut fiction *Maidenhome*, *Army Nurse* tells the story of Qiao Xiaoyu, an ordinary looking girl, who joins the Communist Army as a nurse at the age of fifteen. She is sent to a local hospital during the Cultural Revolution, where she stays for

the next fifteen years before getting the chance to be transferred to a larger hospital in the city. The film begins with Xiaoyu's voice-over taking us back to the time when she became an army nurse fifteen years before. Xiaoyu's task is to look after the wounded soldiers on the wards. One day Xiaoyu is embarrassed because she cannot read a rare character in a new patient's name. She then finds the man with this name, Ding Zhu, a well-educated handsome officer, whose harmonica always helps her daydreams soar. She is attracted to him. Then comes a crucial moment in the film when Ding Zhu asks her to change his bandage for him:

> As Xiaoyu re-dresses Ding Zhu's wound, the silence persists, powerfully intensifying a temporal sense—creating a suffocating moment of desire and restraint. The silence glues our vision to the only motion on the screen: the white bandage placed by female hands onto a male chest. The silence of inexpressible passion forces us to imagine the sound of the would-be lovers' heartbeats. (Cui Shuqin 71)

He is shortly released from the hospital, but not a day goes by without her missing him.

Much later, she suddenly receives a letter from him. Trying to have a private moment, she reads the letter in the toilet. It is a letter confessing love for her. Just as the feeling of happiness spreads inside her, someone calls her name. In panic, she flushes the letter away. Years pass, and Xiaoyu has already turned thirty. A good comrade is introduced to her with her leader's approval. Just as the two are about to get married, Xiaoyu leaves her fiancé without saying goodbye, giving up her chance to be back in the city. A voice in the past is still calling her from the remote hospital (similar to Rochester's voice calling Jane Eyre), so Xiaoyu goes back to her wards, always longing to see those eyes searching for her.

Although *Army Nurse* was well received, the final version is not what Hu Mei intended it to be. The difficult process of making *Army Nurse* tells the story of how difficult it is to make a women's film. First, writer Ding Xiaoqi and Hu Mei had to tell "August First [Studio leaders] that Qiao Xiaoyu was a heroine, a woman who had contributed to the revolution for many, many years," since that "was the only way" they could get permission to "make the film" (Berry, "Interview with Ding Xiaoqi" 110). What both Ding Xiaoqi and Hu Mei treasured in Xiaoyu was her sensitivity—something that many women share—rather than her heroic deeds. As Jerome Silbergeld observes, "superficially, initially, Xiaoyu is as plain as an old tree, but

> the artistry of this film demasculinizes that virtue and lets us appreciate woman for something other than her superficial film beauty. Just as the movie does, Xiaoyu remains compelling and credible for her basic sensibility, and she exemplifies "woman" in terms of that sensibility. But while this sensibility guides us to an understanding of Xiaoyu's social predicament, it isn't sufficient to protect her from it: a good woman, she's too sensible, too compromising, too giving of herself to ever achieve what's right for her personally. Society, the state, takes all that she can give and then asks for more. (166)

In the very process of filmmaking, this woman called Xiaoyu had to lose more. In the original script, she falls in love three times. As Hu Mei explains:

> Now it's only twice. The first time was with the kid who gives her the notebook she uses as her journal. She looks for him when she comes back on leave, but she can't find him. She never says anything about it, she just asks her mother where he's gone, and her mother tells her that he left. But when people saw the first cut, they said, "This girl's really disgusting! First one, then another, and another." So it had to go. In fact, the three loves are quite different. One is idealized and dreamlike. The second time, she really is in love, but she gets scared because of social pressure. The third one is someone it might be suitable to marry. (Berry, "Interview with Hu Mei" 34)

In the telling of Xiaoyu's story, even though both the director and the script writer made a conscious effort to construct a female perspective with the help of an almost all-female crew, the film still had to pass the censors. In the case of the August First Studio, the decision makers were all male army officers who did not have much sympathy for ambiguous things such as inner voices and refined feelings. Hu Mei said that the film was "structured around the mood," and apparently that makes the film narrative unique—the "disjunction between voice and image" (Cui Shuqin 49). According to Hu Mei, the version we see has already gone through many changes over a ten-month period:

> My original voice-over wasn't very precise. It was scattered and fragmentary. [Xiaoyu] might be doing one thing, but talking about something else. So, like I told you, when she separates from the first guy, the patient she loves so much, she thinks this as she watches him leaving: "What is a shadow? I really don't understand. Sometimes I really want to grab it, but I can't get hold of it at all. When I want to grab hold of it, it goes far away, and when I want to get rid of it, it insists on following me. What is it? Seems people are like that, too." I really liked that. [...] Anyway, when I finished my first recording of the voice-over, they said, "What does this mean? What's she talking about?" (Berry "Interview with Hu Mei" 34)

The rather imprecise voice-over is exactly where the female narrative or feminine perspective may come in. This seeming inconsistency is a significant element in female consciousness that makes the internalized women's voice heard (Chen Xihe *et al.* 21).

When asked for her views on female directors and women's film, Hu Mei said:

> There are lots of women directors in China, but I've never had the feeling that they are trying to make "women's film." When I see their films, I can't tell if they're made by women or not. They don't have a lot of women's consciousness. [...] In my opinion, the most important is to stand in a position where one can see the world from what is completely a woman's angle. Only if this is achieved will we be able to produce a real "women's film." As to whether Chinese film can produce such a cinema, or whether China's women directors can make films in accordance with female consciousness, of course they can (Berry, "Interview with Hu Mei" 36-7)

Hu Mei's understanding of the Fifth Generation is that they "are all very individual. In the past, the demand on us all to be the same was too great, so now it's our own experiences and our own thoughts, and we want to express them" (38). Hu Mei understands Xiaoyu's choice as having a "religious color"—"It was beautiful then, but it was actually blind" (qtd in Li Mengxue 44). The word "religious" may sound exaggerating, but among generations of atheists who became Communists, the devotion to revolution is not very different from the devotion to God. Compared to Jin and Qiu Qiu, Xiaoyu's sacrifice is not as great but very obvious. There was only one kind of love that was proper for her, and that is, the love for the Party, the army, and the country.

Xiaoyu is not as stunningly beautiful as the typical Gong Li heroine, but the beauty in her becomes tangible when we see the paths that her heart has taken. She is a real woman, just as her creators are also real women who have no intention of altering their true gender experiences. Zhang Lixin calls Xiaoyu a "woman's female image," as contrasted with a "man's female image" and a "non-man's female image"—such as some of those created by fourth-generation female directors (63-65). Hu Mei's debut work was as ground-breaking as male directors' debut works. The power of personal feeling that she put into the film gave her work life, which turns watching *Army Nurse* into an experience similar to later personal films by sixth-generation directors.

During a special seminar on *Army Nurse*, participants could not agree with each other as to whether Xiaoyu should leave her fiancé or not (since technically, they had already filled out the marital application form that indicates the agreement of marriage). If *Army Nurse* had been released ten years later, the number of her lovers and her final decision to stay or leave would have been less important. The problem in the 1990s would be as follows: Is there anyone who would like to invest in such a film? If Li Shaohong did not have to take commercial considerations into account when making *Blush*, she could also have had the feminine consciousness surface in a more apparent way.

As for why female directors of the fourth and fifth generations look at the issue of women's film so differently, Li Mengxue suggests that the disagreement came from their different experiences of the Cultural Revolution (44). It was during this anarchist period that discrimination against women's gender re-emerged. In denunciation meetings, for instance, only women were branded by a pair of "worn shoes" hanging on their necks, suggesting that they were not clean no matter what they had done wrong (Huang Shuqin 131).[13] In Tian Zhuangzhuang's *Blue Kite*, a beautiful soldier actress is first dismissed from the army and then jailed as a "counter-revolutionary" just because she refused to dance with high officials and to repent. Xiu Xiu's story also satirizes women's emancipation enforced by Mao: the equality bestowed by one

man can easily be taken away by other men. Dai Jinhua points out that during the Cultural Revolution, women were again insulted for their sex, after seventeen years of being deprived of their cultural and gender identity as women. The drawback, however, also provided a chance for Chinese women to re-surface "from the horizon of history" and make their engendered voice heard and experiences known to all (*Landscape* 126).

3.2 Huang Shuqing's *Woman Human Demon* (1987)

Unlike her peers who regard women as men's equals, Huang Shuqin knows about women's weakness and how they are unable to get around in society. Her observation of how gender difference made women receivers of the most humiliating violence during the Cultural Revolution (131) enabled her to identify with feminist ideas as Zhang Nuanxin and Ning Ying cannot. This identification, however, actually came after the creation and success of *Woman Demon Human*. When the film was completed in late 1987, the response of the critical circle in China was warm, but it was not seen as a woman's film. At a 1989 French film festival, Huang Shuqin was surprised that all critics found *Woman Demon Human* "a radical and complete feminist film," and were fascinated that "such a self-conscious women's film actually came from Mainland China" (116).

As a fourth-generation director who graduated from Beijing Film Academy in 1964, and did not have the chance to direct until 1981, Huang Shuqin's first four features were all assignments from her studio. When she established her reputation and had a chance to choose what she really wanted to direct, she hoped to direct a film representing herself (Ge Hua and Mayfair Yang 124). As she realizes,

> if we want a film to bear the mark of an *auteur*, gender has to be posed before everything else. If gender is lost, how can there possibly be a person? Films by female directors including my early works have not revealed a clear feminine consciousness, and that is why they have all fallen into the super-stable mode of mainstream narratives and have not made any break through. New film languages could not emerge from those films, since they have only repeated and reinforced the male-centered norm. (Huang Shuqin 117)

Although male directors in China have created numerous women's images, most of them are "either men's dependents or created to comfort men. The [female characters] are fantasized by men and all waiting for the scriptwriter and director to point them a way out. These films often

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[13] Xie Jin's *Hibiscus Town* has a similar scene when Red Guards humiliate a female Communist cadre.

have lines such as: 'we women are so unfortunate!'" Huang Shuqin does not believe that women are like that (qtd in Li Xianjie and Xiu Ti 30).

What Huang Shuqin has been looking for is "a perfect woman," namely, "a complete human being" (Ge Hua and M. Yang 126). When she came across a biography of Pei Yanling, Huang got in touch with Pei and followed Pei's opera troop into the countryside. Watching Pei practicing and performing, she saw an actress' life; while "listening to Pei talking about her biological father, foster father, mother, husband, and first love," she learned about another woman's heart (Huang Shuqin, "Woman" 125). To understand Pei Yanling, Huang Shuqin had to understand why she was so obsessed with the desire of playing the role of Zhong Kui—an ugly but kind demon. Since the opera circle has an unwritten rule that women should not play the role of any deity, Pei Yanling's desire had been repressed for seven years before she finally created a new image of Zhong Kui on stage (Shao Mujun, "Pain" 17). In Huang Shuqin's film, the question of why a woman has to play a demon provides suspense for the audiences and serves as the red thread that holds the narrative together.

The actress in *Woman Human Demon* is named Qiuyun. Film actress Xu Shouli played the role of Qiuyun, while Pei Yanling played the favorite role of both herself and Qiuyun—Zhong Kui. The film opens with a scene of little Qiuyun's foster father and biological mother playing the episode of "Zhong Kui Marries off His Sister." They have played the episode so many times that the righteous demon, who fights the evil and cares about his sister's fate as a woman, leaves a deep impression in little Qiuyun's mind. There is a discrepancy between the Zhong Kui performed by others and the Zhong Kui she created in her imagination. The former always appears spotlighted on the stage, while the latter is always in complete darkness, which is shot in a setting covered up by black velvet.

The beginning sequence reveals how Qiuyun makes herself up as Zhong Kui, which shows the technical details of how a woman becomes a man/demon: her elegant face and slender figure utterly disappearing beneath the facial painting and a man's costume. Once the transformation is complete, Zhong Kui looks into the mirror, which is split into five pieces, and sees Qiuyun's back. When Qiuyun returns the gaze, she sees Zhong Kui's face, which is also her own face in disguise. The initial set-up here reveals a rejection of making the feminine become a visual spectacle for man (Li Xianjie and Xiu Ti 31).

When structuring the film, Huang Shuqin and her crew had discussion after discussion and "finally decided to keep those incidents in a man's world that would offend a woman most. Every incident was meant to make an impact and push Qiuyun one more step towards her other ego—Zhong Kui" (Huang Shuqin, "Reflections" 9). In the film, the first thing that hurts Qiuyun

is seeing her mother making love with another man, who is actually her biological father. Before long, she witnesses how her father (who is, in fact, the foster father) is humiliated when her mother fails to appear on the stage at her cue in the middle of a performance. Everyone soon finds out that her mother has run away with "another man," but Qiuyun did not expect to be humiliated by other children for her mother's behavior. When a boy who used to protect her like a little sister cries out, "Go and find your wild dad!" Qiuyun is hurt, and her own Zhong Kui appears for the first time, blowing fire out of his mouth and fighting away the evil spirit.

When she reaches adolescence and increasingly develops an enthusiasm for acting, her father tries to discourage her. She practices in secret, and when an actor is sick one day, she replaces him on stage. Her father slaps her and says, "What good is an actress for? She will either be bullied by bad men or turn bad herself just like your mother." Qiuyun replies, "I won't play female roles then, I will play roles of men." Her father decides to leave the troop, but Qiuyun hides in a prop box and stays. Because she has short hair like a boy's, one day she is thrown out of the lady's room and surrounded by some men in the street. When she declares that she is a girl, some hooligans tell her to show them that she is a girl. She is saved by a handsome man who just happens to be passing by and who, as Qiuyun later discovers, is a teacher in the provincial opera school. When Qiuyun is selected, her Zhong Kui appears again, with five little demons cheerfully carrying a bride's sedan. Her father has bitter-sweet feelings, as if he is marrying her off.

The handsome teacher in the school is a skillful warrior actor. When Qiuyun falls in love with him, she hopes to become a beautiful girl in his eyes. He sees her making herself up as a maiden and says: "You think that is pretty? If you can play the role of a man well, that is truly beautiful." Her wish to restore her femininity is thus arrested by the teacher, and she again takes a man as her role model. The teacher likes Qiuyun very much, but since he is married with children, he cannot possibly allow himself to love her. Their relationship becomes fodder for gossip, and the teacher quits for the good of Qiuyun. She returns to her father, but he urges her to go back to the troupe. In a performance, someone puts a nail in a prop table, which hurts Qiuyun's hand. She starts to realize that even playing men's roles cannot change her fate as an actress. Zhong Kui again appears, not as a savior but instead as a sentimental demon who feels sad for his "sister."

The film then skips the ten years of chaos. When Qiuyun resumes acting, she becomes famous for playing the role of Zhong Kui. She is invited to perform in France, but a successful career cannot change her fate as a woman. With an alcoholic-gambler husband who tries to squeeze every cent out of her pocket, her marriage is a disaster. Both father and teacher had made great sacrifices for her, but they can help only with her career and not with her life. As a woman, she feels incomplete until she meets Zhong Kui once again on the stage. When she asks, "who is

it?" Zhong Kui answers, "I am you and you are me." Apparently, this ugly demon is the only one who can understand her. In reference to the story "Zhong Kui Marries off His Sister," the demon says, "The only thing I am worried about is that I haven't married you off." Qiuyun replies, "I am already married. It's you who married me off to the stage." Zhong Kui asks, "Did you ever regret it?" Qiuyun says, "No."

As Dai Jinhua and many other scholars point out, *Woman Demon Human* is another story about the Mulan complex, in which a woman succeeds in the disguise of a man but still cannot change her fate as a woman (*Landscape* 167). The collaboration of two female artists in telling the story of a woman itself has become a meaningful event for women's film in Chinese film history. In the telling of Qiuyun's stories, we see her shame and embarrassment at almost every turn of her coming-of-age. Qiuyun has tried to escape from the prison house for women by becoming a man—"a very good man who is concerned about women's fate," like Zhong Kui. Once she becomes him at the climax of her career, she also loses him, as indicated by the closing sequence when Qiuyun attempts to embrace Zhong Kui, whose face first fills the background of the stage and then disappears.

When *Woman Demon Human* emerged in the late 1980s, women's writing in literature had not achieved what it has today. At the time, many scholars did not realize that the film was indeed a feminist text in terms of both form and content. In the 1990s, a younger generation of female writers (mostly born around 1960 or later) began writing their personal stories and innermost feelings and experiences in monologues, or self-narrative, which is often accused as having a "narcissist intention" which is even now a derogatory word to many. I think the reason why *Woman Demon Human* has been more widely accepted than *Army Nurse* is that the former splits Qiuyun's self into a woman and a demon, whose dialogue can be understood more readily than the latter's split between a woman's voice and her vision.

Ten years after the emergence of Huang Shuqin's film, another female artist tells her story by crossing the boundary between two types of artistic language, which should be recognized as another event for women's film in Chinese cinema.

3.3 Yang Liping's *The Sun Bird* (1997)

Written, co-directed, and played by Yang Liping, *The Sun Bird* is a unique personal story about herself, one of China's best-known dancers of the Bai ethnic minority. The protagonist of the film is called Tana, which is also the real name of the minority girl who played the teenage Tana. In a sense, the film is a double autobiography. On the textual level, Tana tells her stories of

the past with her voice-over in the film. Meanwhile, by making *The Sun Bird*, Yang Liping has completed her autobiography through the medium of film.

Compared to many films about women made by female directors at the turn of the 1990s, the feminine consciousness in Yang Liping's film is consistent and distinctive. The mark of the *auteur* and her gender is so clear that no one can possibly confuse this film with other films, as critics in Japan and film judges of the Montreal International Film Festival have recognized. In Yang's native China, the film has not received due attention, probably because Yang Liping does not really belong to the film circle and her film can hardly be classed with others.

As the debut film of a veteran dancer, *The Sun Bird*'s narrative is very sophisticated and fluent. Tana's dances are the thread weaving together a present and a past that are highly distanced from each other: the gap itself is intriguing. If Qiuyun's art is about crossing the distance between a woman and a demon, Tana's is about overcoming the distance between the margin and the center by merging the boundaries between the primitive and the civilized. In Tana's story, the Mulan complex is simply irrelevant. Her success, unlike Qiuyun's, is not achieved through hiding her femininity, but rather through revealing it. No one would fail to recognize Tana's gender, and the exotic otherness she carries with her. She has become a focus of the center—contemporary Han culture—not because she strives to be, but because she remains true to herself, which is a rare case indeed. Both Yang Liping, the creator of the film, and Tana, the narrator of the film, are quite frank about their gender. The moment both adult Tana and young Tana appear, we are attracted to the vision from a pair of female eyes.

The feminine perspective of the film expressed from the start, interestingly enough, a woman's problems with her eyes. Immediately following the credits, we see the shape of a reclining body in red coming alive and rolling forward from a "horizon" in the darkness, which is followed by many rolling bodies, forming a sea of red waves. As the camera zooms out, we find that the spectacle is in fact the vision of a woman, who is having her eyes examined by a doctor. The doctor cannot tell what is wrong with her eyes that, according to the woman, often confuse every other color with red. Tana's voice-over tells us that red is her initial memory of color upon separation from her mother's body. Apparently, Tana cannot really tell the difference between her actual vision and what she sees with her mind's eye. Accordingly, the fear of losing her sight is accompanied by the fear of losing her mind.

Seeing different things, and seeing things differently, make Tana a loner. In public, she is often asked questions about her past: if she never went to a dance school, is it merely natural talent that has led to her success? Overwhelmed by her art in a strangely beautiful and engaging body language, her fans—mostly Han Chinese—simply cannot imagine the source of her

inspiration. Facing curious reporters, Tana has never succeeded in answering their questions. When her agent, Yuan Wen, talks her into accepting a television interview, she seems to be prepared before the show. As soon as the light in the studio is turned on, her eyes become irritated, and she leaves the studio. Annoyed by her "irresponsibility," Wen thinks about leaving her. Tana, knowing that she has done something wrong, albeit inadvertently, waits for Wen's phone call while talking to herself.

Tana's conflict with Wen is also one between the opposite extremes of an "irrational" minority of female artists and a practical Han male agent, who is very devoted to promoting his client. He knows her value better than others, and, in more than one scene, we see him staring intently as she dances. He is obviously attracted to this mysterious, beautiful minority woman, whose trust, dependence, and occasional ambiguous intimacy have won his heart, unbeknownst to him. Although Tana does not always appreciate his effort in promoting her, he cannot leave her, just as she cannot leave him. Tana thinks that Wen is more curious about her past than anyone else, but she cannot easily tell him her story. The main reason is that she cannot readily interpret her memory into a verbal language, since in her childhood reality, life was filled with rituals mostly encoded through body movement and chanting. Tana masters Mandarin almost perfectly, but there are simply many things in her mother tongue and native culture that cannot be translated into Chinese.

What Tana has successfully transformed from her past is the perception of nature through her dances. "Moonlight," "Rain," "Snake," "Fire," "Two Trees," and "Spirit of the Peacock" (which are Yang Liping's signature works) are all well received by Han audiences. Other than "Two Trees," all of the dances are single dances performed by Yang/Tana alone, usually with no stage set. It is simply her slender silhouette dancing with a huge full moon in the background, or her shining nails sparkling like raindrops, or her long hair "burning" like flames in a red back-light, she never stops telling of moods and emotions. For her trademark work, "Spirit of the Peacock," Yang Liping has received the crown of the "Peacock Princess"—originally the princess in a Dai Jinhua legend. Today, referred to by the mass media as a "national treasure,"[14] Yang Liping herself is the legend.

In the flashbacks revealing her past, young Tana starts dancing for the first time while watching a film called "The White Haired Woman." (The first man to whom young Tana feels close is the projector operator who knows about things "outside the mountains." He gives her the first candy she ever tastes and a mirror in which she recognizes her own image.) Seeing Xi'er dancing, little Tana suddenly rises and imitates the ballerina, but her dance is not ballet. Her

brother calls out, "Tana, you are better!" She takes no notice—from the very start, she enters her own private world when dancing. If the adult Tana always avoids looking at people, the young Tana is an intense observer who never stops watching. She witnesses how her mother suffers during childbirth, and when her mother cries out in pain, she runs off in search of her father, only to find that he is making love with another woman. Her mother loses her life, although all of the women of the village had surrounded the hut, chanting for her safe delivery. Soon after, Tana watches her father in a ritual of ox slaughtering, where he risks his life in order to get the ox's heart. Gored by the ox's horn, her father, unable to say anything, drops the heart at her feet. Tana later learns that her father did this in order to show regret for her mother.

The most bewildering ritual for Tana is the peacock dance that the village head, Mao Tian, performs for the first night of every couple. The local people believe that peacocks are born in the sun, and that is why they call them sun birds. Tana climbs up a tree to watch the peacock dance. Seeing the intoxicated expression of ecstasy on Mao Tian's face when he indulges himself in the dancing, Tana senses that there is a different world beyond everyday reality. After losing both parents, Tana sees Mao Tian as her protector. One day, she runs panic stricken to his hut when she feels an abdominal cramp and sees blood flowing out: she thinks she will die. Mao Tian tells her that she will not die and that she has in fact become a woman. Unable to understand exactly what that means, Tana is told by Mao Tian to join other women in a cleansing ritual in the rain. Again, womanhood is related to blood and the color red in Tana's mind.

Seeing the many huge fans that Mao Tian has made of peacock feathers for each new couple in the village, Tana asks him which one was for her parents. Mao Tian says that she has to look for it by herself, and that he will also make one for her when she marries the man she loves. Tana replies, "but you are the one I love." Later Mao Tian burns down his craft house, including all of the peacock fans and himself, leaving a permanent wound in young Tana's heart. Recalling her first love, Tana creates dances about rain and fire; to nurse her wound, Tana replaces Mao Tian's vigorous, primitive, and masculine peacock dance with her own passionate, elegant, and feminine version. The connection between her dances and girlhood experiences is quite subtle, yet solid—bridging the gap between art and life, girlhood and womanhood, intrusive reality and the immortal memory. The two worlds of dance and the past are presented in perfect harmony, while "real life" often intrudes in an unwelcome manner.

Just before performing her long-awaited "Spirit of Peacock," Wen finds that Tana has gone completely blind, and that is the symbolic price she pays for staying "sane"—a doctor had once warned her that mental blindness is something more horrifying than losing one's sight.

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[14] Editor, "Fortnight Programme" in *City Entertainment*, No. 537, November 11-24, 1999, 91.

When Wen guides her to the edge of the stage, we hear her say, "This is a warm hand. It will take me to a world that it knows nothing about." Chinese audiences are already familiar with this dance, which is now considered a classic. In the film, however, the most intensive part of the dance is altered by the montage juxtaposing scenes from Mao Tian's peacock dance and reaction shots of Tana's facial expressions. When the dance draws to an end, Tana hears the applause. She bows, but there is no audience. Wen asks the auditorium DJ to extend the applause a little longer. The DJ says, "She really needs some applause." Wen replies, "No, that is not what she needs." At this point, Wen finally begins to understand Tana. The last shot is a close up of Tana's face: "My *moliyena*," she murmurs—she has found her ideal land.

As a woman's film produced in the late 1990s, *The Sun Bird* contains elements earlier women's films do not share. First of all, as a minority woman, Tana's/Yang Liping's perspective renders *The Sun Bird* an extremely valuable text that differs from the "minority films" made by Han directors. Despite the fact that, in a song mourning her mother, women's devotion to giving men comfort is stated in a sad tone, Tana herself has never suffered for her "sex" as Qiuyun has in her coming-of-age. Second, as a female minority artist recognized by the dominant Han culture, she truly occupies a marginal cultural position. Her unique art, encoded in an exotic and mysterious body language, inspired by primitive minority rituals, has challenged mainstream film narratives from perspectives most Han artists cannot possibly imagine.

The Sun Bird and *Woman Demon Human* are both based on the life experiences of two famous female artists: Hebei Opera actress Pei Yanling and Bai Minority dancer Yang Liping. Both films construct a feminine inner world by presenting a different reality where the protagonist's other self exists. I would not say that this semi-biographical type of picture can make women's true voice heard, but people do tend to listen to stories of famous women with more attentive ears and less judgmental attitudes. In other words, audiences may feel like judging Xiaoyu's rights and wrongs, but they are likely to accept the stories of Pei Yanling and Yang Liping at face value. *The Sun Bird* also shares *Army Nurse*'s voice-over, which helps to reveal the inner world of woman, emphasizing that the women tell their own stories rather than being told by others.

Within the larger context of contemporary Chinese culture, the rise of "personal writings" (*geren xiezuo*) appeared as an ultimate challenge to the literary tradition. When personal narrative became a trend after the avant-garde in the 1990s, women were given another chance to tell their true stories. In fact, as the majority of critics agree, the most controversial personal narratives are all from women writers, since their gender has provided them another frame of reference—their

experiences as women—which is largely undefined. Female directors in China have not matched the achievement of female writers, because film is not as personal an activity as writing. Although, as Hu Mei's story told us, it is really difficult for women's film to surface from the horizon of the film industry, *Army Nurse*, together with the two other films, has revealed the power of women films. In fact, all three films discussed above have certain elements that were ahead of women's writing at its time. Hu Mei's use of an imprecise voice over, Huang Shuqin's employment of mirror images, and Yang Liping's elaboration of body language are examples of how film language can incorporate a more powerful revealing of women's inner worlds.

Just looking at how the highly didactic *White Haired Woman*, a revolution classic of all times, affects little Tana by luring her into the world of dancing. We can tell that a woman may always free herself from the prison house of the patriarchal language by perceiving the world her way. Although Qiao Xiaoyu, Qiuyun, and Tana are very different women, their gender has provided them a personal space in contrast to what belongs to the public or the community. In the search of such a personal space, female directors of the fourth and fifth-generation have gone the beyond their generation boundary and come closer to younger generation of filmmakers.

What I want to make clear is that it is not totally impossible for male directors to represent women's true psychology. In fact, as early as 1989, *One and Eight*'s director Zhang Junzhao and one of the cameramen Xiao Feng (the other one was Zhang Yimou) made a film called *Arc Light*. Adapted from Xu Xiaobin's novella by the writer herself, the film is about a case study of Xie Ni and Liu Kai, two students of mental disease. In order to see the inner world of their beautiful female patient, Jinghuan, the girl student Xie Ni encourages Liu Kai, who is also her boyfriend, to develop an intimate "friendship" with Jinghuan. When Jinghuan begins to trust Liu Kai, she tells him about an icy lake in arc light that she always sees in her illusion, where she feels free and happy. Liu Kai is so drawn to Jinghuan's world that he starts to fall for her. Zhang Junzhao and Xiao Feng chose to make *Arc Light* in order to depart from the early fifth-generation films that rebelled "loudly" (Bai Xiaoding 20). *Arc Light* is the opposite of *One and Eight* in more than one way: feminine, "mysterious, and floating in atmosphere" (21). The collaboration with Xu Xiaobin provided the male filmmakers an opportunity to explore in a strange but meaningful direction.

Xia Gang, a fifth-generation specialist of urban films, also explores feminine psychology in a film called *Yesterday's Wine* (1995). Meng Zhu, the director's wife, adapted the screenplay from a novella by Chen Ran. The story is about a fatherless girl, Meng Meng, who has an intimate experience that comes between a lover's relationship and a father-daughter one with a doctor who lives next door. Later on, Meng Meng meets a handsome boy and follows him to

California. From a photo, she finds out that the boy is actually the son of the doctor, a discovery that makes her uneasy. She returns to Beijing without telling him why. The boy dies in a car accident, and Meng Meng is left with a feeling of perpetual guilt.

Both Chen Ran and Xu Xiaobin are now considered key figures in women's writing of the 1990s in China. Their personal stories have certainly lent power to the two films' depiction of women. I believe that when a director is bold enough to challenge all conventions and norms, s/he cannot avoid dealing with gender issues. With honesty and insights, maybe one day a tripartite negotiation is possible. In 2001, a Hong Kong artist Chou Wah-shan made a documentary about three Mosuo minority women living in China's only matriarchal community in Yunan province. In this community, which is not an "imagined" one, women are respected, but men are not oppressed. Women and men are at ease with their gender roles and sexuality. Critics suggest that the very existence of such a relatively primitive community is a critique on sex/gender wars brought by "civilization." I regard the video as possible third dimension in filmmaking and other artistic creations.

Conclusion Breaking the Wave, Breaking the Wall

In China, arts and art criticism have recovered and blossomed after the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). While older artists were revived because of an urge to reflect on the past, new artists have come in waves and made their unique statements on art and life. Poets, filmmakers and even literary critics have been divided into "generations," but the most famous "generation" among all is "the Fifth Generation." No generation of filmmakers in China has been as popular, controversial and provocative as the Fifth Generation. No generation of films has evoked as many cultural discussions as fifth-generation films among critic-scholars from all disciplines, including literature, film, history, sociology and anthropology. The Fifth Generation has been developing in an era in which every kind of aesthetic pursuit has been challenged by the market economy, and when fundamental concepts such as nation, tradition, culture and history have been constantly re-examined in a Western light. It is like a polyhedron mirror, with each facet reflecting a different aspect of contemporary Chinese culture.

From 1983 to 2001, the Fifth Generation has gone through many changes with the deepening of the economic reforms in China. When it first emerged, it was regarded as a group speaking from an elite cultural position, making art-house films to reflect the culture at an intellectual level. As a group of fierce cultural rebels, fifth-generation directors established their cultural-hero status through counter-traditional and anti-heroic attitudes, but now most of them have learned the art of compromise, which has brought them rewards from both the Chinese government and the market. Although critic-scholars have announced the "death" of this generation and the "end" of its myth almost every time its works have suffered criticism, this group has remained at the top of the Chinese film industry. Fifth-generation films have remained controversial—people still love or hate them but cannot be indifferent, as a recent survey has revealed (Guo Xiaolu 16-22).

Compared to Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige's stories of the past, urban films by Huang Jianxin, Li Shaohong, Xia Gang, Ning Ying, He Qun, and Zhang Jianya have enjoyed critical acclaim and popularity in their own right. These films, by focusing on people in modern China, have deconstructed fifth-generation allegories on the one hand and become a new "leitmotif" on the other. All fifth-generation directors have claimed that they want to show more concern for the "person," but doing so is not an easy task. As critic Ni Zhen points out, "Chinese people's value system is a group-value system, which has been voluntarily carried on and has penetrated deeply into their behaviors, emotions and consciousness" (Ni Zhen et al. 14). In Chinese films before the Fifth Generation, it was an unwritten law that an individual's interest should always be

subordinated to the needs and goals of the group or community. As director Huang Jianxin says, "A Chinese intellectual never has his own individual integrity, since his value system depends on how he is evaluated by others" (Dai Jinhua et al. 14). The earlier works of the Fifth Generation have boldly represented "how the individual confronts the group and how the individual suffers from breaking away from the group." Both have been depicted as painful, or even destructive processes (Ni Zhen et al. 14).[1]

Both the strengths and the limitations of the Fifth Generation lie in its awareness of the great tradition in Chinese culture and history. The awareness of how little an individual could do was what held its members together in their initial rebellion against both Confucian teachings and Communist education, both of which have always repressed personal opinions and visions. The same awareness, however, has prevented them from "getting personal" in their narratives—they think that the account of personal experiences is something too "narrow" and thus "insignificant." Fifth-generation directors think so, and most older filmmakers thought so. This is why, when the Sixth Generation emerged with film narratives offering a much more personal tone, it was rejected like no other generation had been before.

Concerning sixth-generation directors, the descriptive words used most frequently include independent, underground, neo-documentary, neo-urban (Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 385), and "Generation-X" (Kuoshu 25). Some scholars have called them *houwudai*—post-fifth-generation directors (Han Xiaolei, "Breaking" 58), while others have used *xinshengdai*—new generation—to refer to them. Most mainland scholars, however, tend to use the Sixth Generation, since the term suggests the generation's position in Chinese film history. This generation is composed of two forces that are not related to each other. The main force is the 1989 and 1991 graduates from Beijing Film Academy, while the minor force includes some freelance artists and young people from the television industry (58). With respect to whom they should include in the Sixth Generation, scholars have not agreed with each other, but most have counted more than twenty younger directors including, the actor-turned-director Jiang Wen (Lü Xiaoming 28). Except for a few who were born in the early 1960s, most sixth-generation members were born in the latter half of the 1960s (27).

Most sixth-generation members were studying in the Beijing Film Academy after the rise of the Fifth Generation, whose film works became their textbooks. Instead of studying various new waves of filmmakers as fifth-generation members did, they preferred alternative art films by *auteurs* around the world: David Lynch, Peter Greenway, Krzysztof Kieslowski, and so forth

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[1] See related discussions in Wang Yuejing, "The Rhetoric of Mirror, Shadow, and Moon: Samsara and the Problem of the Representation of Self in China."

(Han Xiaolei, "Breaking" 59). Upon graduation, however, they found that what they learned in the Academy did not help them to deal with reality; no one welcomed them. Some were accepted into film studios but did not have a chance to direct; others were jobless because China did not yet have a role for "independent filmmakers." Facing a declining market, the imposing figures of fifth-generation directors, and an unsympathetic critical circle, these young men rebelled, but in a quiet way.

Perhaps by coincidence, Zhang Yuan, the leading director of the Sixth Generation, was a graduate from the cinematography department of BFA like Zhang Yimou. Zhang Yuan's debut work *Mama* (1990) was the first black and white film shot in China after all the film studios turned to color in the 1960s. Focusing on a single mother raising a retarded son, the film used non-professional actors and was shot in documentary style. (Fifth-generation films in a similar style, including Ning Ying's *For Fun* and *On the Beat* and Zhang Yimou's *The Story of Qiuju* and *Not One less*, were all made later than *Mama*.) Zhang Yuan took *Mama* to the Nante Film Festival in France, just as Chen Kaige went there with *Yellow Earth*, winning both the jury and audience prizes before travelling to over twenty other film festivals around the world (Dai Jinhua, *Landscape* 397). Like his fifth-generation seniors, Zhang Yuan was known abroad before he was known in China. Later, Wang Xiaoshuai's *The Days* (1993), another black and white feature, also received remarkable international recognition. It was not only awarded the best picture and best director prizes at Italian and Greek film festivals, but also selected for permanent collection in the Museum of Modern Art (New York) and as an entry in the list of BBC's "A Hundred Films of A Hundred Years of Cinema" (405). Sixth-generation filmmakers made the film circuits because, if they could not sell their products in China, they could only hope for recognition elsewhere.

When we look back at their experiences during the previous decade, we find that it was really not easy for sixth-generation directors to make their entrance into China's film industry. During the early 1990s, the Chinese government had stopped sponsoring film studios except for the August First Film Studio and the Children's Film Studio (Rayns, "China" 70), while foreign investors were only investing in projects by established fifth-generation directors. If personal stories were their choice, the use of black and white film and the rough editing were not. Considering the impact a film like *The Days* has made, we would have to admit that its director is very talented, shooting the film with a very small budget of $7,000 US, while the lowest budget for a feature film was $120,000 US at the time. Another talented director of the younger generation, He Jianjun (or He Yi), managed to make his debut feature *Red Beads* (1993) for $10,000 US also in black and white (77). Now scholars compare these black and white films in a

documentary style with various new-wave works, but these directors explain that the lower cost was a significant element in such a choice (Lü Xiaoming 24).

In 1993, Zhang Yuan made his second feature (in color), *Beijing Bastard*, which is now considered as a representative work of the Sixth Generation. A key figure, who took part in the production as both a producer and an actor, was China's most famous rebel rocker, Cui Jian. The theme of rock and roll and young people emerged in two other sixth-generation films, Guan Hu's *Dirt* (1994) and Lou Ye's *Weekend Lovers* (1994). Around the mid-1990s, rock music became a symbol of sixth-generation films, in contrast to the folk music in fifth-generation films. Even in Wu Wenguang's 1993 documentary, *1966—My Red Guard Era*, rock music from a women's band called Cobra was inserted between interviews with five former Red Guards. Both Guan Hu's *Dirt* and Li Xin's *Falling in Love* (1995) depict the youthful restlessness and unspeakable anxiety with "a rock'n'roll rhythm and MTV-styled editing," and both were extremely popular among young audiences. Among the solicited articles in both the 1995 and 1996's College Student Film Festival in China, one third of the articles were on these two films (Zhang Tongdao, "Youth Films" 62). Audiences who were used to traditional films or even fifth-generation allegories were annoyed by these films, which did not have stories or heroes (Han Xiaolei, "Breaking" 61).

If fifth-generation filmmakers "rebelled with a cause" as the spiritual sons and daughters of the Cultural Revolution, it seemed that sixth-generation directors "rebelled without a cause." They do not remember much of the nightmarish Cultural Revolution; and even though the Tiananmen Incident occurred when they were in school, it did not affect them as the Cultural Revolution affected the Fifth Generation. When sixth-generation directors began filmmaking, they did not have the life experiences that many fourth and fifth-generation members had when they started making films. Wang Shuo insightfully compare sixth-generation directors to Taiwan-based director Tsai Ming-liang, whose works "never aim to search for the soul of the nation, and are more urban and personal" (*Ignorant* 6).[2] It is true that all generations of filmmakers in China (from the second to the fifth) had experienced wars, poverty, and political movements, while the Sixth Generation suffered none of these unfortunate events except for the brief incident of 1989. This is why, when their early films revealed "discontent," some critics asked: "What do they rebel against? Who had ever offended them?" (Zuo Shula 81), as if they did not have the right to rebel.

Now, a decade after their difficult entrance into China's film culture, critic-scholars have gradually recognized these younger directors and value them as the most radical challengers of

both film traditions established by older generations and recent norms set by the Fifth Generation. First of all, sixth-generation films are mostly based on original scripts, demonstrating a definite farewell to literature and literariness. Second, by focusing on marginal urban misfits who do not have a stable profession or income and are too tired or avant-garde to have concerns beyond their own survival or the creation of their own art, national spirit is totally out of the question. Third, the constant absence of the father and the father's generation, the indifference towards tradition, and the focus on "the present," with "a remarkably frank and matter-of-fact attitudes to questions of sexual behavior and identity" make history irrelevant (Rayns, "China" 77). Finally, most female characters in these films are out of "love," becoming mere gender symbols (12). No matter whether it is the rebellious Ye Tong in *Dirt* or the pregnant girlfriend who runs away in the rain at the beginning of *Beijing Bastard*, they can be replaced by other women in their relationship with their boyfriends.

Nothing is sublimated in these films in which "loneliness and boredom are painted in a personal color," while both story and theme are lost in the matrix of a cultural condition infused with various Post-theories (Song Chunyu 14-15). The un-rushed documentation of trivial incidents and individual's physical or psychological encounters can be irritating to Chinese audiences, who go to the cinema in expectation of a melodrama that they can relate to. David Chute, however, after seeing *Beijing Bastard*, *Red Beads*, and *The Days* at the Vancouver International Film Festival in 1994, commented:

> All three movies were terrific—stark and urban in locale and attitude, oblique and poetic in narrative strategy, and focusing rigorously upon intimate personal concerns while apparently disdaining overt political telegraphy. [...] [They revealed] a more generalized discontent and alienation [similar to] their contemporaries in the West, [taking] the darkest possible view of life [as] the truest one. ("Beyond the Law" 60)

Such views on life may carry a narcissistic orientation, but compared to fifth-generation films produced around the same time period that were heavily allegorical, their true representation of life experiences should be valued (Lü Xiaoming 23).

Most sixth-generation films are youth stories that are quite different from fourth and fifth-generations' stories about youth, which unavoidably portray a nostalgic sentiment. The average age of the crew of *Dirt* was twenty-four, which means that they were writing stories that they had just experienced and perhaps were still experiencing (Yu Yunke 32). In the film, Ye Tong, who moved to Guangzhou with her parents, comes back to Beijing for a college education. For many years, she has kept the memories of her childhood friends as among her most precious ones. Now

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[2] See Chuck Stephens, "Intersection: Tsai Ming-liang's Yearning Bike Boys and Heartsick Heroines."

she finds them all grown up, and the past is past. After a series of confusing encounters with some young men, she suddenly loses her direction and decides to quit school. We feel that she is searching for another kind of life because the "normal" life is so easy to have, yet too boring to live.

Among Chinese critics, Zhang Ming's directorial debut, *In Expectation* (1995), is a sixth-generation work that has received the most praise. The film is set in the Three Gorges area in Sichuan province, in a natural landscape, revealing natural performance from its three characters—a policeman, a young widow, and a lighthouse guard. The story slowly emerges from scenes cut among these three ordinary people's everyday lives, which are both familiar and strange—repetitious, ordinary, and yet with a touch of black humor. This is a film with no miracles or Cinderella endings, but it has touched its Western audiences deeply. Berlinale's organizers called it a unique, creative, warm, and humanistic work, "the most beautiful film" ever received by the Youth Forum (Wang Xinyu 78).

Currently, sixth-generation directors, after ten difficult years, have finally won their place in Chinese film culture and world cinema. From sixth-generation films—each focusing on a different type of marginal figure's everyday life, both older Chinese and Western audiences have begun to learn that today's China is different. The big issues and the great Chinese tradition do not matter as much to younger Chinese as they used to. In film and other artistic creations, "the prominent position of the market has replaced many administrative and ideological concerns," and thus "ideology has lost its central control." Intellectuals have been "surprisingly marginalized," while the positions of writers and filmmakers are no longer "holy" (Zhang Zhizhong 3). This is why, although not out of their own choice, sixth-generation directors were forced to be underground filmmakers once, but have now obtained the option of becoming "independent" under the China Film Investment Corporation and making films of their preference "legally." In 1999, four directors of the Six Generation were recruited into the "Youth Film Project" of the Beijing Film Studio, in which Wang Xiaoshuai, Guan Hu, Ah Nian, and Lu Xuechang began new experiments, keeping a balance between their personal styles and the needs of the studio (Wang Fanghua 85).

Talking about the Sixth Generation, a director I must mention is Zhang Yang, whose debut work *Spicy Love Soup* (1997) was welcomed by audiences from various age groups in both China and Japan. Consisting of six loosely linked stories, the film reveals episodes in the life of two teenagers, two young lovers, two newly weds, a married couple, a divorcing couple, and a senior woman who looks for a companion for the rest of her life. The pace of the film is rapid and highlighted by an impressive popular music sound track, which sold half a million in Mainland

China. Worked as a MTV editor before taking the director's seat, Zhang Yang certainly knows how popular music can be incorporated in films. Zhang Yang's second feature *Shower* (2000) is "a feel-good family hit" (Cowan) that was ranked the fourth on the box office record of 2000. In *Shower*, the elder son, who went to southern China to find opportunity, comes back home to attend his father's funeral after receiving a postcard from his brother. He then finds that his father is fine and working in a family-run bathhouse with his retarded brother. When the father past away shortly after, he decides to stay and take care of his brother. The father and son's relationship reaches harmony after both making efforts. This theme is echoed in *Postman in the Mountains* (1999) by Huo Jianqi, a fifth-generation art designer who started directing around 1995, indicating a new round of negotiations between the "modern" and the tradition.

In earlier studies of the Fifth Generation, the concept of authorship has been used, but fifth-generation authorship is not exactly the kind of *auteurism* that emerged in the French New Wave. Fifth-generation directors have never reached an *auteurism* at a unique personal level. Sixth-generation directors, including Lu Xuechang, Wang Xiaoshuai, Li Xin, Lou Ye, and He Jianjun have all achieved very personal styles in their narration of urban life in today's China. In Chinese film culture today, any new director, whatever the label, can make his/her contribution by "searching for new possibilities in depicting human emotions, behaviors, and reflections" (Yin Hong, "Fifth Generation" 27). At the turn of the 21st century, younger directors who were born in 1970s began another wave of personal films. Jia Zhangke and Li Hong, for instance, have won international awards for their debut works that reveal the world with new visions. Ultimately, what matters most is not a particular film style, but rather the possibility of seeing with different eyes and depicting Chinese life to offer a better understanding of people, rather than mystifying or allegorizing China for one reason or another.

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FILMOGRAPHY

Feature Films by Director

Cai Chuseng (second-generation director)

New Woman (*Xin Nüxing*) 1934. Lian Hua Film Company. B&W. 109 minutes. Silent. Screenplay: Sun Shiyu. Cast: Ruan Lingyu, Wang Moqiu, Tang Tianxin, Zheng Junli.

Chen Kaigè (fifth-generation director)

Yellow Earth (*Huang Tudi*) 1984. Guangxi Film Studio. Color. 89 minutes. Screenplay: Zhang Ziliang, based on Ke Lan's prose "Echoes in the Deep Valley." Cinematography: Zhang Yimou. Art Direction: He Qun. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Lin Lin. Cast: Wang Xueqi, Xue Bai.

Big Parade (*Da Yuebing*) 1985. Guangxi Film Studio. Color. 88 minutes. Screenplay: Gao Lili. Cinematography: Zhang Yimou. Art Direction: He Qun. Music: Zhao Jiping, Qu Xiaosong. Sound: Lin, Lin. Cast: Wang Xueqi, Sun Chun.

King of the Children (*Haizi Wang*) 1987. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 104 minutes. Screenplay: Chen Kaige and Wan Zhi, based on Ah Cheng's novella of the same title. Cinematography: Gu Changwei. Art Direc-tion: Chen Shaohua. Music: Xiao Song. Sound: Tao Jing, Gu Changning. Cast: Xie Yuan, Yang Xuewen.

Life on a String (*Bianzou Bianchang*) 1991. Beijing Film Studio, China Film Co., Pandora Film (Germany) in association with Herald Ace (Japan), Film Four International, Berlin Film Fordereung (Germany), Diva Film (Italy), Cinecompany Netherlands. Color. 107 minutes. Producer: Don Ranvaud. Executive Producer: Cai Rubin, Karl Baumgartner. Screenplay: Chen Kaige, based on a prose by Shi Tiesheng. Cinematography: Gu Changwei. Art Direction: Shao Ruigang. Music: Qu Xiaosong. Cast: Liu Zhongyuan, Huang Lei, Xu Qing.

Farewell, My Concubine (*Bawang Bie Ji*) 1993. Tomson (HK) Film Corp. Ltd., China Film Co-Production Company, and Beijing Film Studio. Color. Wide Screen. 156 minutes. Screenplay: Lillian Lee and Lu Wei, based on Lillian Lee's novel of the same title. Cinema-tography: Gu Changwei. Art Direction: Yang Zhanjia. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Tao Jing. Cast: Leslie Cheung, Gong Li, Zhang Fengyi.

Temptress Moon (*Feng Yue*) 1995. Tomson (HK) Film Co. Ltd. Color. 115 minutes. Original Story: Chen Kaige and Wang Anyi, based on Ye Zhaoyan's novella "Flower's Shadow." Screenplay: Shu Kei. Director of Photography: Christopher Doyle. Art Direction: Huang Qiagui. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Lai Qizhen. Cast: Gong Li, Leslie Cheung, He Saifei.

The Emperor and the Assassin (*Jing Ke Ci Qin Wang*) 1999. Sony Pictures, Shin Corporation & Le Studio Canal, New Wave Co., Beijing Film Stuido in association with NDF. Color. 161 minutes. Producer: Chen Kaige, Shirley Kao, Satoru Iseki. Production Design: Tu Juhua. Screenplay: Wang Peigong, Chen Kaige. Director of Photography: Zhao Fei. Set Dresser: Yang Shimin. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Tao Jing. Cast: Li Xuejian, Gong Li, Zhang Fengyi.

Chen, Joan (actress and director)

Xiu Xiu: The Sent-Down Girl (*Tian Yu*)1996. Red Sky Entertainment, Stratosphere Entertainment, and Whispering Steppes Production. Color. 100 minutes. Screenplay: Joan Chen and Yan Geling, based on Yan Geling's novella "Celestial Bath." Cinematography: Lü Yue. Art Design: Liu Shiyun. Editing: Ruby Yang. Music: Johnny Chen. Cast: Lu Lu, Lopsang.

Cui Wei (third-generation director)

Song of Youth (*Qingchun zhi Ge*) 1959. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 170 minutes. Co-direction: Chen Huai'ai. Cinematography: Nie Jin. Screenplay: Yang Mo, based on her novel of the same title. Art Direction: Qin Wei. Music: Qu Xixian. Sound: Cai Jun and Wang Zemin. Cast: Xie Fang, Qin Wen.

Little Soldier Zhang Ga (also *Zhang Ga: A Boy Soldier*, *Xiaobing Zhang Ga*) 1963. Beijing Film Studio. B&W. 11 Reels. Co-direction: Ouyang Hongying. Screenplay: Xu Guangyao. Cinematography: Nie Jing. Art Direction: Qin Wei. Music:

Liu Zhuang. Sound: Wang Yunhua. Cast: An Jisi, Wu Keqing.

Duan Jishun (third-gneration director)

The Go Master (also *An Unfinished Chess Game, Yipan Meiyou Xia wan de Qi*) 1982. Beijing Film Studio & Japan Toyo Tokkuma Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Co-director: Sato Junya. Screenplay: Li Hongzhou, Ge Kangtong. Cast: Sun Daolin, Huang Zongying.

Fei Mu (second-generation director)

Spring in a Small Town (*Xiaocheng zhi Chun*) 1948. Wenhua Film Company. B&W. 93 minutes. Screenplay: Li Tianji. Cinemato-graphy: Li Shengwei. Sound: Miao Zhenyu. Art Design: Chi Ning. Music: Huang Yijun. Cast: Wei Wei, Li Wei.

Feng Xiaogang (film and television director and script writer)

Part A Part B (*Jiafang Yifang*) 1997. Beijing Forbidden City Film Co. and Beijing Film Studio in association with Beijing Xinyingjia Investment Ltd. Color. 85 minutes. Producer: Zhang Heping, Han Sanping. Screenplay: Feng Xiaogang, Yu Gang. Cinematography: Wang Xiaolie. Art Design: Yao Qing. Music: Li Bojiang. Cast: Ge You, Liu Pei, He Bing, Feng Xiaogang, Xu Fan.

Be There of Be Square (*Bujian Busan*) 1998. Beijing Film Stuido and Beijing Forbidden City Film Company. Color. 103 minutes. Producer: Victor Li. Screenplay: Gu Xiaoyang. Cinemato-graphy: Zhao Fei. American Unit Manager: Craig Ayres. Cast: Fe You, Xu Fan.

Sorry, Baby (*Meiwan Meiliao*) 1999. Beijing Forbidden City Film Co., Hua Yi Film & TV Entertainment Co. Ltd., and Hua Yi Brothers Advertising Company. Color. Producer: Zhang Heping, Wang Zhongjun, Dong Ping. Screenplay: Wang Xiaozhu, Bai Tiejun. Cinematography: Yang Xiaoxiong. Cast: Ge You, Wu Chien-lien, Fu Biao.

A Sigh (*Yisheng Tanxi*) 2000. Beijing Film Studio, Feng Xiaogang Workshop. Color. 115 minutes. Producer: Han Sanping, Wang Zhongjun, Huayi Brothers Advertising Co. Screenplay: Wang Chao. Cast: Zhang Guoli, Liu Pei, Xu Fan, Fu Biao.

Big Shot's Funeral (*Dawan de Zangli*) 2002. Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia, Huayi Brothers Film Co., Beijing Film Studio. Screenplay: Feng Xiaogang, Li Xiaoming, and Shi Kang. Cinematography: Zhang Li. Music: San Bao. Production Design: Liu Xingang. Cast: Donald Sutherland, Ge You, Paul Mazursky, Rosamund Kwan, Ying Da.

Feng Xiaoning (film director, scriptwriter, cinematographer, and art designer)

Meridian of War (*Zhanzheng Ziwuxian*) 1990. Youth Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Feng Xiaoning. Cinematography: Chen Jun, Zhang Guoqing. Art Direction: Han Yunfeng. Music: Guan Xia. Sound: Zhao Jun, Li Wei. Cast: Fu Dalong, Shen Danping.

The Ozone Layer Vanishes (*Daqichen Xiaoshi*) 1990. Children's Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Feng Xiaoning. Cinematography: Zhang Guoqing. Art Direction: Jin Tonglin. Music: Guan Xia. Sound: Zhen Chunyun. Cast: Lü Liping, Wu Jiangan, Wang Yongge, Zhang Ning.

Red River Valley (*Hong Hegu*) 1996. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 115 minutes. Producer: Zhu Yongde. Executive Producer: Zhuo Wu. Screenplay: Feng Xiaoning. Cinematography: Gao Ziyi, Zhang Guoqing, Feng Xiaoning. Art Design: Chen Shaomian, Jiang Bolin. Music: Jin Fuzai. Sound: Zhan Xin. Cast: Paul Kersey, Ning Jing, Shao Bing, Ying Zhen.

Lover's Grief over the Yellow River (*Huanghe Juelian*) 1999. Shanghai Paradise Film & TV Group. Color. 110 minutes. Producer: Jiang Ping. Screenplay/ Cinematography: Feng Xiaoning. Cast: Ning Jing, Paul Kersey.

Purple Sunset (*Zi Ri*) 2001. Shanghai Yongle Film and TV Corp. & Beijing Forbidden City Film Co. Ltd. Color. 120 minutes. Producer: Yang Yubing. Executive Producer: Ye Zhikang, Jiang Ping, Liu Sha. Screenplay/Cinematography: Feng Xiaoning. Cast: Fu Dalong, Maeda Tomoe, Anna Jieniranowa.

Guan Hu (sixth-generation director)

Dirt (*Toufa Luanle*) 1994. Inner Mongolia Film Studio, China Chemical Industry Import and Export General Corporation. Color. 98 minutes.

Screenplay: Guan Hu. Cinematography: Yao Xiaofeng, Wu Qiao. Art Direction: Wei Xinhua. Music: Guo Xiaohu, Gao Qi. Sound: Wu Gang. Cast: Kong Lin, Zhang Xiaotong, Geng Le, Ding Jiali.

He Jianjun (also **He Yi**, sixth-generation director)

Red Beads (*Xuan Lian*) 1992. Produced with the support of the China Eastern Cultural Development Center. B & W. 88 Minutes. Screenplay: Liu Xiaojing, You Ni. Cinematography: Nie Tiejun, Yu Xiaoyang. Art Direction: Wang Wangwang. Music: Guo Xiaohong. Sound: Guan Jian. Cast: Liu Jiang, Shi Ke, Tian Gechen.

Postman (*Youchai*) 1995. United Frontline. Color. 102 minutes. Producer: Tian Yan. Screenplay: He Jianjun, You Ni. Cinematography: Wu Di. Art Direc-tion: Li Mang. Music: Otomo Yoshihide. Sound: Gu Yu, Guan Jian. Cast: Fang Yuanzheng, Liang Danni, Pu Cunxin, Huang Xin.

He Ping (fifth-generation director)

Kawashima Yoshiko (*Chuandao Fangzi*) 1989. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Zhu Zi. Cinematography: Nie Tiemao, Ma Delin. Art Direction: Cheng Mingchang. Music: Tao Long. Sound: Dang Chunzhu. Cast: Zhang Xiaomin, Gao Fa.

Swordsman in the Double Flag Town (*Shuangqi Zhen Daoke*) 1990. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Wide Screen. Screenplay: Yang Zhengguang, He Ping. Cinematography: Ma Delin. Art Direction: Qian Yunxuan. Music: Tao Long. Sound: Wei Jia, Hong Yi. Cast: Gao Wei, Zhao Mana, Chang Jiang.

Red Firecracker, Green Firecracker (*Paoda Shuangdeng*) 1993. Xi'an Film Studio. Hong Kong Wen Partners Organization Co-Production. Color. 12 Reels. Screenplay: Da Ying, based on a novel by Feng Jicai. Cinematography: Yang Lun. Art Direction: Qian Yunxuan. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Gu Changning, Zhang Wen. Cast: Ning Jing, Wu Gang, Zhao Xiaorui.

Daylight Valley (*Riguang Xiagu*) 1995. Huanya Film Corporation Ltd. Color. Stereo. Screenplay: Ya Zhong, based on the novel by Zhang Rui. Cinematography: Yang Lun. Art Direction: Yang Gang. Sound: Ge Weijia. Cast: Zhang Fengyi, Yang Guimei, Wang Xueqi.

He Qun (fifth-generation art designer and director)

Mutiny (*Hua Bian*) 1988. Guangxi Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Li Baolin. Cinematography: Liu Baogui, Fang Miao. Art Direction: Zhang Ruo. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Lin Lin. Cast: Zhu Yidan, Chen Jianfei, Zhang Guangbei.

Prison Car to the West (also *Westbound Convict Train*, *Xixing Qiuche*) 1989. Pearl River Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: He Jianming, Jiang Ao. Cinematography: Zhao Xiaoshi, Gang Yi. Art Direction: Zhao Ruo. Music: Ma Ding. Sound: Huang Minguang. Cast: Du Zhiguo, Li Qiang, Liu Pei.

Steel Meets Fire (*Liehuo Jingang*, Part 1 & 2) 1991. Pearl River Film Studio and Nanyang Art and Cultural Company of Hainan Co-Production. Color. 18 Reels. Co-direction: Jiang Hao. Screenplay: Jiang Hao. Cinematography: Li Xiaolin. Art Direction: Zhang Ruo, Song Weidong. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Liu Haiyan. Cast: Shen Junyi, Li Qiang, Zhao Xiaorui.

To Be Taken In (also *Conned Once* Restaurant, *Shang Yi Dang*) 1992. Fujian Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Co-direction: Liu Baolin. Screenplay: Zhang Xiaolong and Wang Hong, based on the novel "Our Recollection of Youth" by Liang Man. Cinematography: Yu Xiaojun, Zhang Yuan, Yin Yan. Art Direction: Ling Zhihan, Feng Lei. Music: Zhang Shaotong, Liu Lifei, Ma Ding. Sound: Wu Ling, Xu Gang. Cast: Ge You, Ju Xue.

The Vanished Woman (*Shizong de Nüren*) 1992. Fujian Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Co-direction: Liu Baolin. Screenplay: Fu Xuen, He Qun, based on the novel by Wang Shuo. Cinematography: Yin Yan, Zhang Yuan, Yu Xiaojun. Art Direction: Lin Zhihan, Feng Lei. Music: Ma Ding. Sound: Chao Jun. Cast: Ge You, You Yong.

Country Teachers (*Fenghuang Qin*) 1993. Tianjin Film Studio & Xiaoxiang Film Studio Jointly. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Ju Sheng, Liu Xinglong, Pu Yangui, based on Liu Xinglong's novel. Cinematography: Meng Weibing. Art Direction: Zhao Mei. Music: Zhang Shaotong. Sound: Zou Jian. Cast: Li Baotian, Wang Xueqi, Ju Xue.

Strangers in Beijing (*Hun zai Beijing*) 1995. Fujian Film Studio, Hainan Nanyang Culture Group Corporation Co-Production. Color. Screenplay: Suo Fei, based on Hei Ma's novel. Cinematography: Hou Yong, Shang Yong. Art Direction: Li Bing. Music: Zhang Shaotong. Cast: Fang Zige, Ju Xue.

Boys and Girls (*Nahai Nühai*) 1997. Fujian Film Studio. Screenplay: Xiao Yuan. Cinematography: Shang Yong, Li Ming. Art Design: Xu Bangyao. Cast: Zhao Youliang, Kang Xun, Luo Rui.

Hu, Ann (director)

Shadow Magic (*Xiyang Jing*) 1999. Beijing Film Studio & Zian Film Co. (US) Co-Production. Producer: Lee You-Ning, Ann Hu, Chang Zheng. Screenplay: Kate Raisz, Bob McAndrew, Ann Hu. Cinemato-graphy: Nancy Schreiber. Music: Howard Shore. Production Designer: Wang Jixian. Cast: Xia Yu, Jared Harris, Xing Yufei.

Hu Mei (fifth-generation female director)

Army Nurse (*Nü'er Lou*) 1984. August First Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Co-director: Li Xiaojun. Screenplay: Kang Liwen. Ding Xiaoqi. Cinematography: He Qin, Wu Fei. Art Direction: Yu Maiduo. Music: Sun Baolin. Sound: Tang Yuanping. Cast: Xu Ye, Hasi Bagen, Zhao Gang.

Far Removed from War (*Yuanli Zhanzheng de Niandai*) 1987. August First Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Li Baolin. Cinematography: Zhang Li. Art Direction: Fang Xuzhi. Music: Zhen Qiufen. Sound: Wang Dafan, Huang Yinxia. Cast: Huang Zongluo, Wang Xueqi, Zhu Ling.

Marksman without a Gun (*Wu Qiang de Qiangshou*) 1988. August First Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Wang Zequn. Cinemato-graphy: Wu Feifei. Art Direction: Cai Weidong. Music: Guo Feng. Sound: Xiang Zhiliang. Cast: Zhang Yi, Wang Xian.

An Emperor on the Run (*Jianghu Bamian Feng*) 1991. Youth Film Studio. Color. Wide Screen. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Ni Feng. Cinemato-graphy: Sun Cheng. Art Direction: Zhang Zili. Music: Zhang Qianyi. Sound: Guan Shuxin. Cast: Che Yue, Cheng Donghai, Hou Shuang.

Urban Gunman (*Dushi Qiangshou*) 1992. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Liu Shugang, Shen Jimin. Cinematography: Yan Junsheng, Liu Ping. Art Direction: Yang Wan. Music: Shan Bao. Sound: Zhang Baojian. Cast: Shi Ke, Liang Guoqing, Yan Gang.

Hu Xueyang (sixth-generation director)

A Lady Left Behind (also *Those Left Behind*, *Liushou Nüshi*) 1991. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Zhang Xian, Yu Yun. Cinemato-graphy: Gao Ziyi. Art Direction: Guo Dong-chang. Music: Su Junjie. Sound: Zhang Xin. Cast: Xiu Jingshuang, Sun Chun.

Drowning (*Yanmo de Qingchun*) 1994. Shanghai Film Studio & Hainan Shifei Company Co-Production. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Fang Jiajun, Xu Zhengqin. Cinematography: Hua Qin. Art Direction: Shen Lide. Sound: Ni Zheng. Cast: Sharen Gaowa, Hu Xueyang, Yu Lousheng.

Living Dream (*Qianniuhua*) 1995. Shanghai Film Studio in association with China Network Group. Color. 104 minutes. Screenplay: Hu Xueyang. Cinemato-graphy: Ju Jiazhen. Art Direction: Xue Jianna. Music: Sun Junjie. Sound: Feng Deyao. Cast: Jindao Xingxing, Zhang Mengxin, Chang Rong.

Huang Jianxin (fifth-generation director)

Black Cannon Incident (*Heipao Shijian*) 1985. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. Letterboxed. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Li Wei, based on Zhang Xianliang's novel "Romance of the Black Canon." Cinematography: Wang Xinsheng, Feng Wei. Art Direction: Liu Yichuan. Music: Zhu Shirui. Sould: Li Lanhua. Cast: Liu Zifeng, Gao Min, Gerhard Olschewski.

Dislocation (*Cuowei*) 1986. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screen-play: Li Wei. Cinemato-graphy: Wang Xinsheng, Feng Wei. Art Direction: Qian Yunxuan. Music: Han Yong. Sound: Gu Changning. Cast: Liu Zifeng, Mu Hong, Sun Feihu.

Samsara (*Lunhui*) 1988. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 14 Reels. Screen-play: Wang Shuo, based on his novella "Emerging from the Sea." Cinemato-graphy: Zhao Fei. Art Direction: Yang Gang. Music: Qu Xiaosong. Sound: Tang Yuanping, Gu Changning. Cast: Lei Han, Tan Xiaoyan.

Stand Up, Don't Bend Over (*Zhanzhile, Bie Paxia*) 1992. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 11 Reels. Screen-play: Huang Xin, based on Deng Gang's novella "Neighbors." Cinematogra-phy: Zhang Xiaoguang. Art Direction: Zhang Zhili. Music: Zhang Dalong. Sound: Yan Jun, Dang Wang. Cast: Feng Gong, Zhang Lu, Da Shichang.

The Wooden Man's Bride (*Wu Kui*) 1993. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 11 Reels. Screen-play: Yang Zhengguang, based on the novel by Jia Pingwa. Cinematography: Zhang Xiaoguang. Art Direction: Teng Jie. Music: Zhang Dalong. Sound: Yan Jun. Cast: Chang Shih, Wang Lan, Wang Fuli, Wang Yumei.

Back to Back, Face to Face (Lian dui Lian, Bei kao Bei) 1994. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 147 minutes. Producer: Jacob Cheung, Willy Tsao, Li Xudong. Screenplay: Huang Xin and Sun Yian, based on Liu Xinglong's novella "Intoxicated Autumn Wind." Cinematogra-phy: Zhang Xiaoguang, Zhu Sen. Art Design: Li Xingzheng. Sound: Yan Jun. Editor: Lei Qin. Music: Zhang Dalong. Cast: Niu Zhenhua, Lei Gesheng, Li Qiang, Ju Hao.

Signal Left, Turn Right (*Da Zuo Deng, Xiang You Zhuan*) 1995. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 110 minutes. Screenplay based on Ye Guangcen's novel "Learning to Drive." Cast: Ding Jiali, Niu Zhenhua, Ju Hao.

Surveillance (*Maifu*) 1996. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 108 minutes. Co-direction: Yang Yazhou. Screenplay: Sun Yan, based on Fang Fang's novella of the same title. Cast: Geng Gong, Jiang Shan, Niu Zhenhua, Guo Baolin.

Something about Secret (*Shuochu nide Mimi*) 1999. Zhejiang Film Studio. Color. 98 minutes. Screenplay: Si Wu. Cinematography: Zhang Xiaoguang. Art Design: Teng Jie. Music: Xiang Ming. Cast: Wang Zhiwen, Jiang Shan.

Huang Jianzhong (fourth-generation director)

A Good Woman (*Liangjia Funü*) 1985. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Li Kuanding. Cinematography: Yun Wenyue. Art Direction: Shao Ruigang. Music: Si Wanchun. Sound: Zheng Chunyu. Cast: Cong Shan, Zhang Weixin.

My 1919 (*Wo de 1919*) 1999. Xi'an Film Studio, Movie Channel, Beijing Film Studio. Screenplay: Huang Dan, Tang Louyi. Cinematography: Zhang Zhongping. Art Design: Li Yao. Music: Xu Shuya. Sound: Zhang Wen, Liu Yan. Cast: Chen Daoming, He Zhengjun, Xu Qing.

Huang Shuqin (fourth-generation female director)

Woman Demon Human (*Ren Gui Qing*) 1987. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 11 Reels. Screenplay: Huang Shuqin, Li Ziyu, Song Rixun. Cinematography: Xia Lixing, Ji Hongsheng. Art Direction: Zhen Changfu. Music: Yang Mao. Sound: Ge Weijia. Cast: Pei Yanling, Xu Shouli, Li Baotian.

Huo Jianqi (fifth-generation art designer and director)

Postmen in the Mountains (*Na Shan, Na Ren, Na Gou*) 1999. Xiaoxiang Film Studio & Beijing Film Studio in association with Hunan Postal Bureau. Color. 89 minutes. Producer: Kang Jianmin, Han Sanping. Executive Producer: Li Chunhua. Screenplay: Si Wu, based on Peng Jianming's short story "That Mountain, That Person, and That Dog." Cinematography: Zhao Lei. Art Design: Song Jun. Music: Wang Xiaofeng. Sound: Guan Jian. Cast: Teng Rujun, Liu Ye.

A Love of Blueness (*Lanse Aiqing*) 2000. China Film Group, Beijing Film Studio, and Move Channel. Color. 97 minutes. Producer: Li Xiaogeng. Jiang Tao, Geng Xilin. Screenplay: Si Wu, Dong Zhou. Cinema-tography: Zhao Lei. Music: Wang Xiaofeng. Sound: Chao Jun. Cast: Pan Yueming, Yuan Quan, Dong Yong.

Jia Zhangke (director born in the 1970s)

Xiao Wu (Xiao Wu) 1997. Color. 108 minutes. Screenplay: Jia Zhangke. Cinematography: Yu Lihua. Art Dirction: Lin Xiaoling. Sound: Lin Xiaoling. Cast: Wang Hongwei, Hao Hongjian, Zuo Baitao.

Platform (Zhantai) 2000. Hong Kong / China / Japan / France Co-Production. Runtime: 155 minutes (Berlin Film Festival), 193 (Venice film

festival), 185 (Tokyo FILMeX 2000). Screenplay: Jian Zhangke. Cast: Wang Hongwei, Zhao Tao, Liang Jingdong Liang, Yang Tianyi, Wang Bo.

Jiang Wen (actor and sixth-generation director)

In the Heat of the Sun (*Yangguang Canlan de Rizi*) 1995. Hong Kong Dragon Film International in association with China Film Co-Production Corp. B&W/Color. 139 minutes. Screenplay: Jiang Wen, based on a novella by Wang Shuo. Director of Photography: Gu Changwei. Art Direction: Chen Haozhong. Music: Guo Wenjing. Sound: Gu Changning. Cast: Xia Yu, Ning Jing, Geng Le, Tao Hong.

Devils on the Doorstep (*Guizi Laile*) 1999. Asian Union Film and Entertainment Ltd. & China Film Co-production Corporation. B&W/ Color. 162 minutes. Screenplay: Wang Shuping, Jiang Wen, Shi Jianquan. Cinemato-graphy: Gu Changwei. Cast: Jiang Wen, Jiang Hongbo, Kagawa Teruyuki.

Jin Chen (director born in the 1970s)

Love in the Internet Age (*Wangluo Shidai de Aiqing*) 1998. Xi'an Film Studio. Screenplay: Guo Xiaolu. Color. Cinematography: Cao Yu. Art Design: Wei Nin. Music: An Wei. Cast: Hu Jing, Chen Jainbin, Sun Xun.

Kwan, Stanley (Hong Kong director)

Centre Stage (also *The Actress, Ruan Lingyu*) 1991. Golden Way Films Ltd. and Leonard Ho - Jackie Chan Film. Color and B&W. 126 minutes. Screenplay: Yau Dai An-Ping. Original Story: Peggy Chiao. Cinemato-graphy: Poon Hang-sang. Art Design: Pu Ruomu. Music: Johnny Chen. Cast: Maggie Cheung, Tony Leung Kar-Fai, Carina Lau.

Li Hong (director born in the 1970s)

Tutor (*Ban Ni Gao Fei*)
1999. Color. 90 minutes. Screenplay: Fu Xing. Cinematography: Huang Lian. Art Direction: Li Zhuoyi. Music: Fan Tao. Cast: Gao Feng, Xie Run.

Li Jun (third-generation director)

A Sparkling Red Star (*Shanshan de Hongxing*) 1974. August First Film Studio. Color. 11 Reels. Co-direction: Li Ang. Screenplay: Collective, recorded by Wang Yuanjian and Lu Zhuguo, based on Li Xintian's nove of the same title. Cinematography: Cai Jiwei, Cao Jingyun. Art Direction: Zhen Mingzhe. Music: Fu Gengcheng. Cast: Zhu Xinyun, Bo Guanjun.

Li Shaohong (fifth-generation female director)

The Silver Snake Murder Case (Yinshen Mousha An) 1988. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Hu Bing. Cinematography: Zeng Nianping. Art Direction: Shi Jiandu. Music: Gu De. Sound: Zhang Ye. Cast: Jia Hong-sheng, Li Qingqing, Gao Baobao.

Bloody Morning (*Xuese Qingchen*) 1990. Youth Film Studio. Color. 108 minutes. Screenplay: Xiao Mao and Li Shaohong, based on Garcia Marquez's novel "Chronicle of a Death Foretold." Cinematography: Zeng Nianping. Cast: Kong Lin, Hu Jiajie, Zhao Jun.

Family Portrait (*Sishi Buhuo*) 1992. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Liu Heng. Cinematography: Zeng Nianping. Art Direction: Lin Chaoxiang. Music: Hou Muren. Cast: Li Xuejian, Song Dandan.

Blush (*Hong Fen*) 1994. Beijing Film Studio & Ocean Film Co. (HK) Co-Production. Color. 115 minutes. Producer: Chen Kunming, Jimmy Tan. Screenplay: Ni Zhen and Li Shaohong, based on Su Tong's novella. Cinematography: Zeng Nianping. Art Direction: Chen Yiyun, Lin Chaoxiang. Music: Guo Wenjing. Sound: Wu Ling. Cast: Wang Ji, He Saifei, Wang Zhiwen.

Red Suit (*Hong Xifu*) 1997. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 105 minutes. Screenplay: Li Shaohong. Cinematography: Zeng Nianping. Cast: Song Dandan, Wang Xueqi.

Li Xin (sixth-generation director)

Falling in Love (*Tanqing Shuo'ai*) 1991.

Gun with Love 1997. Color. 102 minutes. Screenplay: Zhen Xianghong. Producer: Zhu Yongde. Cinemato-graphy: Huang Baohua. Art Direction: Chen Shaomina, Jiang Bolin. Sound:

Zhang Xin. Music: Su Juanjie. Cast: Annie Ino, Wang Yanan, Dong Ruixin.

Ling Zifeng (third-generation director)

Daughters of China (Zhonghua Nü'er) 1949. Northeast Film Studio. B&W. 10 Reels. Co-direction: Zhai Qiang. Screenplay: Yan Yiyan, based on a historical incident. Cinema-tography: Qian Jiang. Set Design: Zhu Ge. Music: Ge Yan. Sound: Lu Xianchang. Cast: Zhang Zheng, Yue Shen.

Camel Xiangzi (Luotuo Xiangzi) 1982. Beijing Film Studio. Color. Wide Screen. 12 Reels. Screenplay: Ling Zifeng, based on Lao She. Cinematography: Wu Shenghan and Liang Zhiyong. Art Direction: Yu Yiru. Music: Jn Xixian. Sound: Wang Zemin. Cast: Zhang Fengyi, Siqin Gaowa.

Liu Miaomiao (fifth-generation female director)

Stories of the Voyage (*Yuanyang Yishi*) 1985. Fujian Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Wu Jianxin. Cinematography: Zhen Wangong, Yang Ming. Cast: Liu Jiaoxin, Li Xiaoyan.

Women on the Long March (also *Hoofbeats, Mati Shengsui*) 1987. Xiaoxiang Film Stuio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Jiang Qitao. Cinematography: Zhang Li, Yan Yuanzhao. Art Direction: Yang Li. Music: Wen Zhongjia. Sound: Huang Shiye. Cast: Bianba Danzi, Yang Qiong.

The Boxer (*Quanji Shou*) 1988. Xiaoxiang Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Liu Fangwei. Cinematography: Liu Yuefei. Art Direction: Yang Li. Music: Wen Zhongjia. Sound: Huang Siye. Cast: Liu Yan, Liu Shangxian.

Innocent Babbler (*Za Zuizi*) 1992. Children's Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Yang Zhengguang, Liu Miaomiao. Cinematography: Wang Juwen. Art Direction: Liu Jian, Liao Yongjun. Music: Wun Zhongjia. Sound: Huang Siye, Wang Zhihong. Cast: Li Lei, Cao Cuifen, Yuang Jing.

Family Scandal (*Jia Chou*) 1994. Youth Film Studio and Ningxia Film Studio. Color. Co-direction: Cui Xiaoqin. Screenplay: Le Meiqin, Zhang Tingji. Cast: Li Wannian, Wang Zhiwen, He Bing, Wu Dan.

Lu Xuechang (sixth-generation director)

The Making of Steel (*Zhangda Chengren*) 1998. Beijing Pegase Cultural Communication Center. Color. 108 minutes. Producer: Tian Zhuangzhuang. Screenplay: Lu Xuechang. Cinematography: Zhang Xigui. Art Design: Li Jixian. Cast: Zhu Hongmao, Zhu Jie, Li Qiang.

A Lingering Face (*Feichang Xiari*) 1999. Beijing Film Studio, China Film Corporation, and Center for Satellite Broad Casting. Color. 94 minutes. Producer: Han Sanping, Tong Gang. Screenplay: Lu Xuechang, Li Jixian. Cinematography: Wang Yu. Editor: Kong Leijin. Music: Nathan McCree. Sound: Fei Geng. Cast: Ma Xiaoqing, Pan Yueming, Li Min.

Lü Yue (fifth-generation cinematographer and director)

Mr. Zhao (*Zhao Xiansheng*) 1998. Hong Kong and China Co-Production. Color. 89 minutes. Executive Producer: Liu Xiaodian. Producer: Yang Hongguang. Screenplay: Shu Ping, Wang Tianlin. Cast: Shi Jingming, Zhang Zhihua, Chen Yinan, and Jiang Wenli.

Lou Ye (sixth-generation director)

Weekend Lover (*Zhoumo Qingren*) 1993. Fujian Film Studio & Hainan Xinghai Fixed Asset Company Ltd. Co-Production. Color. 96 minutes. Screenplay: Xu Qin. Cinematography: Zhang Xigui. Art Direction: Li Jixian. Music: Zhang Shaotong. Sound: Lu Jiajun. Cast: Wang Zhiwen, Ma Xiaoqing, Jia Hongsheng.

Suzhou River (*Suzhou He*) 1999. Essential Film and Dream Factory. Color. 82 minutes. Production: Nai An and Philippe Bobber. Screenplay: Lou Ye. Cinematography: Wang Yu. Editing: Karl Riedl. Music: Jürg Lemberg. Cast: Jia Hongsheng, Zhou Xun, Hua Zhongkai.

Mi Jiashan (fifth-generation director)

The Trouble Shooters (*Wan Zhu*) 1988. Emei Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Wang Shuo, Mi Jiashan. Cinema-tography: Wang Xiaolie. Art Direction: Gan Shaocheng. Music: Xie Jun.

Sound: Luo Guohua. Cast: Zhang Guoli, Ge You, Liang Tian, Ma Xiqing, Pan Hong.

Ning Ying (fifth-generation female director)

Someone Loves Me (*Youren Pianyao Aishang Wo*) 1990. Beijing Film Studio. Color. Wide Screen. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Xiao Mao. Cinematography: Li Tian. Art Direction: Shi Jiandu. Music: Gu De. Sound: Zhang Hua. Cast: Chang Xiaoyang, Wang Ban.

For Fun (*Zhao Le*) 1992. Beijing Film Studio & Hong Kong Wanhe Film and Television Company Ltd. Co-Production. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Ning Dai, Ning Ying. Cinematography: Xiao Feng, Wu Di. Art Direction: Yang Xiaowen. Music: Meng Weidong. Sound: Chao Jun. Cast: Huang Zongluo, Huang Wenjie.

On the Beat (*Minjing Gushi*) 1995. Eurasia Communications, Euskal Media and Beijing Film Studio Co-Production. Color. 102 minutes. Screenplay: Ning Ying. Cinematography: Zhi Lei, Wu Hongwei. Art Direction: Cheng Guangming. Music: Su Cong. Sound: Chao Jun. Cast: Li Zhanhe, Wang Lianggui.

I Love Beijing (*Xiari Nuanyangyang*) 2000. Color. 97 minutes. Screenplay: Dai Ning, Ning Ying. Cast: Yu Lei, Zuo Baitao, Hong Tao, Yi Gai, Liu Miao.

Peng Xiaolian (writer, fifth-generation female director)

Me and My Classmates (*Wo he Wode Tongxuemen*) 1985. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Xie Youchun. Cinematography: Liu Lihua. Art Direction: Zhou Xinren. Music: Liu Yanxi. Sound: Dong Jujing. Cast: Bu Lan, Zhou Jingzhou.

Women' Story (*Nüren de Gushi*) 1987. Shanghai Film Studio. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Xiao Mao. Cinematography: Liu Lihua. Art Direction: Zhou Xinren. Music: Yang Mao. Sound: Tu Mingde. Cast: Zhang Wenrong, Zhang Min, Song Ruhui.

Once Upone a Time in Shanghai (*Shanghai Jishi*) 1999. Color. 90 minutes. Screeplay: Bian Zhenxia, Jiang xiaoqin, Zhang Jianya, Peng Xiaolian. Music: Pan Guoxing. Sound: Ge Weijia, xu Xiushan. Cast: Wang Yanan, Yuan Quan, Dai Zhao'an, Chen Hongmei, Wei Li.

Shi Runjiu (sixth-generation director)

A Beautiful New World (*Meili Xin Shijie*) 1998. Xi'an Film Studio & Imar Film Co. Co-Production. Color. 98 minutes. Producer: Zhang Pimin. Executive Producer: Duan Zhongtan, Xue Zhongding. Screenplay: Liu Fendou, Wang Yao. Cinematography: Lü Yue. Art Design: An Bin. Original Song: Wu Bai. Music Editor: Peter Loehr, Shi Runjiu. Sound: Wang Xueyi. Cast: Jiang Wu, Tao Hong, Chen Ning, Ren Xianqi, Wu Bai.

All the Way (*Zou Daodi*) 2000. Xi'an Film Studio, Imar Film Co. Co-Production. Color. 87 minutes. Producer: Peter Loehr. Cast: Jiang Wu, Karen Mok, Chang Chenyue.

Sun Zhou (fifth-generation director)

With Sugar (*Gei Kafei Jia dian Tang*) 1987. Pearl River Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Zhen Hua. Cinematography: Zhen Hua, Wang Suiguang. Art Direction: Tu Benyang. Music: Zhu Shirui. Sound: Feng Lunsheng. Cast: Chen Rui, Li Fengxu.

Bloodshed at Dusk (*Dixue Huanghun*) 1989. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Sun Yi'an. Cinematography: Zhao Lei. Art Direction: Dou Guoxiang, Shen Qin. Music: Guo Wenjing. Sound: Gu Changning. Cast: Shen Junyi, Zhou Min.

The True Hearted (*Xin Xiang*) 1991. Pearl River Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Miao Yue, Sun Zhou. Cinematography: Yao Li. Art Direction: Shi Haiying. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Deng Qinghua. Cast: Fei Yang, Zhu Xu, Wang Yumei.

Breaking Silence (*Piaoliang Mama*) 1999. Color. 86 minutes. Pearl River Film Studio & Guangdong Sanjiu Film Co. Ltd. Co-Production. Producers: Huang Yong, Zhao Xinxian. Screenplay: Liu Heng, Sun Zhou, Shao Xiaoli. Director of Photography: Lü Yue. Art Design: Jin Rongzhe. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Chao Jun. Cast: Gong Li, Gao Xin.

Tian Zhuangzhuang (fifth-generation director, producer)

September (*Jiuyue*) 1984. Kunming Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Yan Tingting, Xiao Jian. Cinematography: Hou Yong. Art Direction: Huo Jianqi. Music: Xu Jingqin. Sound: Zhang Jiake. Cast: Jiang Yunhui, Wu Tao, Wang Minzhi.

On the Hunting Ground (*Liechang Zhasha*) 1985. Inner Mongolia Film Studio. Color. 8 Reels. Screenplay: Jiang Ao. Cinematography: Lü Yue, Hou Yong. Art Direction: Zhang Xiaoan, Li Geng. Music: Qu Xiaosong. Sound: Wu Ling. Cast: Bayaertu, Laxi, Aotegeng Bayaer.

Horse Thief (*Daoma Zei*) 1986. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. Wide Screen. 88 minutes. Screenplay: Zhang Rui. Cinema-tography: Hou Yong. Art Direction: Huo Jianqi. Music: Qu Xiaosong. Sound: Hui Dongzi. Cast: Cexiang Rigzin, Dan Zhiji, Daiba.

Drum Singers (*Gushu Yiren*) 1987. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 11 Reels. Screenplay: Tian Zhuangzhuang, based on the novel by Lao She (1899-1966). Cinemato-graphy: Liang Zhiyong. Art Direction: Ning Lanxin. Music: Dai Yisheng. Sound: Wu Ling. Cast: Li Xuejian, Tan Mindi.

Rock Kids (*Yaogun Qingnian*) 1988. Youth Film Studio, Beijing Film Academy. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Liu Yiran. Cinematography: Xiao Feng. Art Direction: Li Yan. Music: Xu Peidong. Sound: Zhao Jun. Cast: Tao Jin, Ma Ling, Shi Ke.

Li Lianying: The Imperial Eunuch (*Da Taijian Li Lanying*) 1990. Beijing Film Studio and Hong Kong Shijia Film Company with the cooperation of China Film Co-Production Corporation. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Guo Tianxiang. Cinemato-graphy: Zhao Fei. Art Direction: Yang Yuhe, Yao Qing. Music: Mo Fan. Sound: Wu Ling. Cast: Jiang Wen, Liu Xiaoqing, Zhu Xu.

The Blue Kite (*Lan Fengzheng*)
1993. Hong Kong Longwick, Beijing Film Studio Co-Production. Color. 139 minutes. Screenplay: Xiao Mao. Cinematography: Hou Yang. Art Direction: Zhang Xiande. Music: Yoshihide Otomo. Sound: Wu Ling and Yoshiaki Kondo. Cast: Yi Tian, Lü Liping, Pu Cunxin, Li Xuejian.

Wang Bin (third-generation director)

The White-Haired Woman (*Bai Mao Nü*) 1950. North-East Film Studio. B&W. 13 Reels. Co-direction: Shui Hua. Screenplay: Shui Hua, Wang Bin, and Yang Runshen, adapted from a drama. Cinematography: Qian Jiang. Set Design: Lu Gan. Sound: Sha Yuan. Musci: Qu Wei, Zhang Lu, Ma Ke. Singers: Wang Kun, meng Yu. Cast: Tian Hua, Li Baifang.

Wang Rui (sixth-generation director)

After Divorce (*Lihun le, Jiu Bie zai Lai Zhao Wo*) 1997. Youth Film Studio and Beijing Wanzhong Group. Color. 97 minutes. Producer: Jin Jiwu. Screenplay: Fei Ming. Cinematography: Yao Xiaofeng. Art Design: Cui Junde. Sound: Yin Zhe. Cast: Li Baotian, Gai Ke, Zhang Yan.

Flying Lepord (*Chongtian Feibao*) 2000. Youth Film Studio & Movie Channel Co-Production. Screenplay: Cao Baoping. Cinematography: Yao Xiaofeng. Cast: Hu Jun, Wang Xueqi, Feng Guoqiang.

Wang Xiaoshuai (sixth-generation director)

The Days (*Dong Chun de Rizi*) 1993. Yinxiang Film Workshop. B&W. 85 minutes. Screenplay: Wang Xiaoshui. Cast: Yu Hong, Liu Xiaodong, Lou Ye, Wang Xiaoshui.

Suicide (*Da Youxi*) 1994. Color. Screenplay: Pang Ming, Wang Xiaoshuai. Cast: Jia Hongsheng, Ma Xiaoqing.

Frozen (*Jidu Hanleng*) 1995. Color. 99 minutes. Screenplay: Pang Ming, Wang Xiaoshuai. Cast: Jia Hongsheng, Ma Xiaoqing, Bai Yu.

Vietnam Girls (also *So Close to Paradise*, *Biandan Guniang*) 1998. Beijing Film Studio and Beijing Jindie Film/Television Art Co-Production. Color. 93 minutes. Producer: Han Sanping. Screenplay: Wang Xiaoshuai, Pang Ming. Cinemato-graphy: Yang Tao. Music: Liu Lin. Art Design: Cheng Kuangming. Cast: Wang Tong, Shi Yu, Guo Tao, Wu Tao.

Beijing Bicycle (*Shiqisui de Danche*) 2000. Art Light Films in association with Pyramid Productions, Fonds Sud Cinema (France), Public TV Service Foundation (Taiwan), Beijing Film

Studio. Color. 113 minutes. Producer: Peggy Chiao. Screenplay: Wang Xiaoshuai. Cinematography: Liu Jie. Music: Wang Feng. Sound: Chen Chen. Art Design: Wang Wenjun. Cast: Cui Lin, Li Bing, Zhou Xun.

Wu Tianming (fourth-generation director)

Old Well (*Lao Jing*) 1987. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. Wide Screen. 14 Reels. Screenplay: Zheng Yi, based on his novel of the same title. Cinematography: Chen Wancai, Zhang Yimou. Art Direction: Yang Gang. Music: Xu Youfu. Sound: Li Lanhua. Cast: Zhang Yimou, Liang Yujin, Lü Liping.

Wu Ziniu (fifth-generation director)

A Probation Member (also *Reserve Team Member*, *Houbu Duiyuan*) 1983. Xiaoxiang Film Studio. Color. 8 Reels. Co-direction: Chen Lu. Screenplay: Xie Wenli. Cinematography: Zhang Li. Art Direction: Lin Jingsong, Li Yongqi. Music: Tan Dun. Sound: Huang Yinxia. Cast: Jiang Shuo, Liu Weihua.

Secret Decree (*Diexue Heigu*) 1984. Xiaoxiang Film Studio. Color. Wide Screen. Co-direction: Li Jingmin. Screenplay: Cai Zhaisheng, Lin Qinsheng. Cinemato-graphy: Zhang Li. Art Direction: Xia Rujin. Music: Tan Dun. Sound: Huang Yinxia. Cast: Du Yulu, Zhao Jiawen, Cui Minpu.

The Dove Tree (*Gezi Shu*) 1985. Xiaoxiang Film Studio. Not released.

The Last Day of Winter (*Zuihou de Dongri*) 1986. Xiaoxiang Film Studio. Screenplay: Wu Ziniu, based on Qiao Xuezhu's novella "Brothers and Sister."

Evening Bell (*Wan Zhong*) 1988. August First Film Studio. Color. Wide Screen. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Wu Ziniu, Wang Yifei. Cinematography: Hou Yong. Art Direction: Na Shufeng. Music: Ma Jianfei. Sound: Wang Lewen, Zhang Lei. Cast: Tao Zeru, Lu Ruolei, Ge Yaming.

To Die Like a Man (Part 1 *Joyous Heroes* [*Huanle Yingxiong*] & Part 2 *Between the Living and the Dead* [*Yinyang Jie*]) 1988. Fujian Film Studio. Color. 18 Reels. Wide Screen. Screenplay: Sima Xiaojian, based on her father Sima Wensen's novel "Stormy Tong River." Cinematography: Yang Wei, Liu Junyun. Art Direction: Tang Peijun, Zhao Shaoping. Music: Shi Wanchun. Sound: Chen Bingkang. Cast: Tao Zeru, Xu Shouli, Shen Junyi, Yang Shaohua.

Big Mill (*Da Muofang*) 1990. Xiaoxiang Film Studio and Hong Kong Sil-Metropole Organization Litd., Co-Production. Color. 9 Reels. Wide Screen. Screenplay: Qiao Liang, Wu Ziniu. Cinematography: Yang Wei. Art Direction: Na Shufeng. Music: Yang Qing. Sound: Huang Qizi. Cast: Li Yusheng, Liu Zhongyuan, Shen Danping, Tao Zeru.

Mountains of the Sun (*Taiyang Shan*) 1991. Fujian Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Sima Xiaojiang. Cinematography: He Qin. Art Direction: Zhao Shaoping. Music: Zhang Shaotong. Sound: Liu Tonghe. Cast: Zhang Liwei, Tao Zeru.

Red Fox (*Huo Hu*) 1993. Changchun Film Studio, Hong Kong Shengxiang Entertainment Develop Corp. Ltd. Co-Production. 10 Reels. Color. Screenplay: Wang Chunbo, Wu Ziniu. Cinematography: Yang Wei. Art Direction: Wu Yang. Sound: Zhang Lei. Cast: Gong Hanlin, Tu Men.

Nanjing 1937 (*Nanjing Datusha*) 1995. China Co-Production Corp. and Taiwan Longxiang Company. Color. Screenplay: Xu Tiansheng, Zhang Jiping, Liang Xiaosheng, Hong Weijian. Cinematography: Hou Yong. Art Direction: Zhang Xiaobin, Lu Qi, Zhu Gang. Music: Tan Dun. Cast: Qin Han, Tao Zeru.

National Anthem (*Guoge*) 1999. Xiaoxiang Film Studio. Producer: Kang Jianmin. Screenplay: Fan Zhengming, Su Shuyang, Zhang Jiping. Cinematography: Y. Huhewula. Art Design: Guo Dexiang, Tong Yonggang, Zhang Biao. Sound: Liu Qun. Music: Yang Qing. Cast: He Zhengjun, Chen Kun, Kong Wei.

Xia Gang (fifth-generation director)

Confident Man (*Zixin de Nanzihan*) 1985. Xiaoxiang Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Co-direction: Jiang Weihe. Screenplay: Shui Yunxian. Cinematography: Wang Kekuan. Art Direction: Rao Weiquan. Music: Yang Yong. Sound: Ning Yuqin. Cast: Sun Min, Hu Zhongqi.

Half Flame, Half Brine (*Yiban Shi Haishui, Yiban Shi Huoyan*) 1989. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 9

Reels. Screenplay: Wang Shuo and Ye Daying, based on the novel by Wang Shuo. Cinematography: Li Tian. Art Direction: Huo Jianqi. Music: Li Lifu. Sound: Wu Ling. Cast: Luo Gang, Ji Ling, Gao Jie.

The Unexpected Passion (*Zaoyu Jiqing*) 1990. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Wide Screen. Screenplay: Zheng Xiaolong, Feng Xiaogang. Cinematography: Zeng Nianping. Art Direction: Huo Jianqi. Music: Lei Lei. Sound: Li Bojiang, Guan Jian. Cast: Yuan Yuan, Lü Liping.

I Still Love You (*Woxin Yijiu*) 1991. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screen-play: Meng Zhu. Cinematography: Ma Xiaoming. Art Direction: Gai Wa. Music: Fu Lin. Sound: Zhang Zhian, Guan Jian. Cast: Li Ting, Shao Feng.

After Separation (*Da Sa Ba*) 1992. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 94 minutes. Screenplay: Feng Xiaogang. Cinematography: Ma Xiaoming. Art Direction: Huo Jianqi. Music: Liang Gang. Sound: Li Bojiang. Cast: Ge You, Xu Fan.

No One Cheers (*Wu Ren Hecai*) 1993. Beijing Film Studio and Yanming International Corp. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Wang Shuo and Meng Zhu, based on Wang Shuo's novella of the same title. Cast: Gai Ke, Xie Yuan, Ding Jiali.

Yesterday's Wine (*Yu Wangshi Gaibei*) 1995. Nanyang Film Corp. & Beijing Film Studio. Color. Screenplay: Meng Zhu, based on Chen Ran's novella of the same title. Cast: Pu Cunxin, Shao Bing.

Xie Fei (fourth-generation director)

A Girl from Hunan (also *Married to a Child, Xiangnü Xiaoxiao*) 1986. Youth Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Co-Direction: Wu Lan. Screenplay: Zhang Xian. Cinematography: Dong Yaping. Art Direction: Xing Zhen. Music: Ye Xiaogang. Sound: Ju Min. Cast: Na Renhua, Deng Xiaogang.

Women from the Lake of Scented Souls (also *Woman Sesame Oil Maker, Xiang Hun Nü*) 1992. Changchun Film Studio and Tianjin Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Xie Fei. Cinematography: Pao Xiaoran. Art Directrion: Ma Huiwu, Wang Jie. Music: Wang Liping. Sound: Liu Xiaochuan. Cast: Siqin Gaowa, Wu Yujuan.

Xie Jin (third-generation director)

Woman Basketball Player No. 5 (*Nülan 5 Hao*) 1957. Tianma Film Studio. Color. Screenplay: Xie Jin. Cinematography: Huang Shaofeng, Shen Xilin. Music: Huang Zhun. Sound: Liu Zhongbo. Art Direction: Wang Yuebai. Cast: Liu Qiong, Qin Yi.

Red Detachment of Women (*Hongse Niangzi Jun*) 1961. Tianma Film Studio. Color. 12 Reels. Screenplay: Liang Xin. Cinematography: Shen Xiling. Art Direction: Zhang Hancheng. Music: Huang Zhun. Sound: Gong Zhengming. Cast: Zhu Xijuan, Wang Xingang, Chen Qiang.

Stage Sisters (*Wutai Jiemei*) 1965. Tianma Film Studio. Color. 11 Reels. Screenplay: Ling Gu, Xu Jin, Xie Jin. Cinematography: Zhou Damin, Chen Zhenxiang. Art Direction: Ge Shicheng. Music: Huang Zhun. Sound: Zhu Weigang. Cast: Xie Fang, Cao Yindi, Shangguan Yunzhu.

The Legend of Tianyun Mountain (*Tianyu Shan Chuanqi*) 1980. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 12 Reels. Wide Screen. Screenplay: Lu Yanzhou. Cinematography: Xu Qi. Art Direction: Ding Cheng, Chen Shaomian. Music: Ge Yan. Sound: Zhu Weigang. Cast: Shi Weijian, Wang Fuli, Shi Jianlan.

Herdsman (*Muma Ren*) 1982. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 106 minutes. Screenplay: Li Zhun. Cinemato-graphy: Zhu Yongde, Zhang Yongzheng. Art Direction: Chen Shaomian. Music: Huang Zhun. Sound: Zhu Weigang. Cast: Zhu Shimao, Chong Shan.

Qiu Jin—A Revolutionary (*Qiu Jin*) 1983. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 13 Reels. Screenplay: Huang Zongjiang and Xie Jin, based on the life of Qiu Jin (1877-1907). Cinematography: Xu Qi, Zhang Yongzheng. Art Direction: Ding Cheng, Zhong Yongqin, Mei Kunping. Music: Ge Yan. Sound: Zhu Weigang. Cast: Li Xiuming, Li Zhiyu.

Garlands at the Foot of the Mountains (*Gaoshan xiade Huahuan*) 1984. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. Wide Screen. 14 Reels. Screenplay: Li Zhun, Li Cunbao. Cinematography: Lu Junfu, Shen Jie, Zhu Yongde. Art Direction: Zhong Yongqing. Music: Ge Yan. Sound: Zhu Weigang. Cast: Lü Xiaohe, Tang Guoqiang, He Wei, Wang Yumei, Gai Ke.

Hibiscus Town (*Furong Zhen*, Parts 1 & 2) 1986. Shanghai Film Studio. Color Wide Screen. 17 Reels. Screenplay: Ah Cheng and Xie Jin, based on Gu Hua's novel of the same title. Cinematography: Lu Junfu. Art Direction: Jin Qifeng. Music: Ge Yan. Sound: Zhu Weigang. Cast: Liu Xiaoqing, Jiang Wen, Zhen Zaishi, Zhu Shibin, Xu Songzi.

The Last Aristocrats (*Zuihou de Guizu*) 1989. Shanghai Film Studio and Sil-Metropole Organization Ltd. (HK) Co-Production. Color. Wide Screen. 12 Reels. Screenplay: Bai Hua, based on the novel by Taiwan author Bai Xianyong. Cinemato-graphy: Lu Junfu. Art Direction: Chen Shaomian. Music: Jin Fuzai. Sound: Zhu Weigang. Cast: Pan Hong, Pu Cunxin, Li Kechun, Xiao Xiong.

The Bell of Purity Temple (*Qingliangsi de Zhongsheng*) 1991. Shanghai Film Studio, the Shanghai Super Start Film Company & Hong Kong Haocheng Film Company Co-Production, with assistance of the China Film Export & Import Co. & the Japanese Daiei Co. Ltd. Color. 12 Reels. Wide Screen. Screenplay: Li Zhun and Li Che. Cinematography: Lu Junfu. Art Direction: Chen Shaomian. Music: Jin Fuzai. Sound: Ge Weijia. Cast: Ding Yi, Pu Cunxin, Kurihara Komaki.

The Opium War (*Yapian Zhanzheng*) 1997. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 150 minutes. Producer: Ann Hui, Zhang Wei. Screenplay: Ann Hui, Zhu Sujin, Ni Zhen. Cinematography: Hou Yong. Music: Huang Hanqi, Jin Fuzai. Production Design: Shao Ruigang. Cast: Bao Guoan, Lin Liankun, Jiang Hua, Rob Freeman, Xiangting Ge, Emma Griffiths-Alin, Carrick Hagon.

Yan Jizhou (third-generation director)

Struggle in an Ancient City (*Yehuo Chunfeng Dou Gucheng*) 1963. August First Film Studio. B&W. 11 Reels. Screenplay: Li Yinru, Li Tian, and Yan Jizhou, based on Li Yinru's novel of the same title. Cinematography: Cao Jingyun, zhang Dongliang. Art Direction: Zhang Zheng. Music: Gao Ruxing. Sound: He Baoding. Cast: Wang Xiaotang, Wang Xingang.

Yang Yanjin (fourth-generation director)

A Troubled Man's Smile (*Kunao Ren de Xiao*) 1979. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Yang Yanjin, Xue Jing. Cinematography: Yin Fukang, Zhen Hong. Art Direction: Xu Jian, Mei Kunping. Music: Xu Jingxin. Sound: Lin Bingsheng. Cast: Li Zhiyu, Pan Hong.

Narrow Street (*Xiao Jie*) 1981. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 11 Reels. Screenplay: Xu Yinghua. Cinematography: Yin Fukang, Zhen Hong. Art Direction; Liu Pan. Music: Xu Jingxin. Sound: Lin bingsheng. Cast: Zhang Yu, Guo Kaimin.

Yang Liping (dancer, actress, director)

Sun Bird (*Taiyang Niao*) 1997. Yunan Minzu Film Studio. Color. 105 minutes. Co-direction: Wang Xueqi. Screen-play: Yang Liping. Cinematography: Zhang Li. Music: Zhao Jiping. Cast: Yang Liping, Wang Xueqi, Tana, Zhou Peiwu.

Ye Ying (also **Ye Daying**, independent director)

Breathing Hard (*Da Chuanqi*) 1988. Shenzhen Film Studio. Color. 90 minutes. Screenplay: Ye Daying, Zhang Qian, Wang Shuo. Cinematography: Zhang Li, Zhong Dalu. Art Direction: Tan Xiaogang. Music: Li Lifu. Sound: Liu Haiyan. Cast: Xie Yuan, Qi Ping.

Red Cherry (*Hong Yingtao*) 1995. Youth Film Studio, Beijing Economic Develop Investment Company Co-Production. Color. 100 minutes? Screenplay: Jiang Qitao. Cinematography: Zhang Li. Cast: Guo Keyu and Xu Xiaoli.

Red Lovers (also ***A Time to Remember***, *Hongse Lianren*) 1998. Beijing Forbidden City Film Co. Ltd. In association with Shanghai Yongle Film Distribution Co. Ltd., Sichuan Southwest Film Co. Ltd., Beijing Xin Ying Lian Film Co. Ltd., and Beijing Dream Film Art Production. Color. 96 minutes. Producers: Zhang Lequn, Yang Zhenhua. Executive Producer: Zhang Heping. Original Story: Jiang Qitao. Screenplay: Mark Kaplan, Andee Nanthanson. Director of Photography: Zhang Li. Music: Zhang Qianyi. Sound: Ji Changhua. Cast: Todd Babcock, Mei Ting, Leslie Cheung, Tao Zeru.

Zhang Huajun (fourth-generation director)

The Mysterious Budda (*Shenmi de Dafuo*) 1980. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay:

Xie Hong, Zhang Huaxun, Zhu Hongsheng, Lu Shoujun. Cinematography: Chen Guoliang, Liang Zhiyong. Art Direction: Wang Yi. Music: Xiong Yihua, Xie Jun. Sound: Wang Dawei. Cast: Zhang Shunsheng, Liu Xiaoqing, Ge Cunzhuang.

Zhang Jianya (fifth-generation director)

Red Elephant (*Hong Xiang*) 1982. Co-directors: Xie Xiaojing and Tian Zhunagzhuang. Children's Film Studio. Color. 8 Reels. Screenplay: Wang Duanyang. Cinemato-graphy: Zen Nianping. Art Direction: Ning Lanxin, Feng Xiaoning. Music: Xu Jingqin. Sound: Zhang Jiake. Cast: Yan Jiao, Zhao Ge.

Trapped on a Frozen River (*Binghe Siwang Xian*) 1986. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Zheng Yi. Cinematography: Qiu Yiren, Huang Renzhong, Shen Xingao. Art Direction: Qiu Yuan. Music: Yang Mao. Sound: Zhan Xin. Cast: Zhuge Min, Ping Lanting.

Kidnapping Karajan (*Bangjia Kalayang*) 1988. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Du Xiaojuan. Cinematography: Jiang Shuzhen. Art Direction: Qiu Yuan. Music: Qu Xiaosong. Sound: Zhan Xin. Cast: Zhen Dasheng, Chen Yi, Yao Erga.

Challenge (*Tiaozhan*) 1990. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Zhang Xian, Mu Jiang. Cinematography: Huang Baohua. Art Direction: Zhou Xinren. Music: Xia Liang. Sound: Zhan Xin. Cast: Zhang Kanger, Ge Lili.

Royal Heart and Soul (*Yidan Zhonghun*) 1991. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screen-play: Lai Ying, Mu Jiang. Cinematography: Huang Baohua. Art Direction: Zhou Xinren. Music: Pan Guoxing. Sound: Qian Ping. Cast: Zhang Kanger, Xiao Rongsheng.

San Mao Joins the Army (*San Mao Congjun Ji*) 1992. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 95 minutes. Screenplay: Zhang Jianya, based on Zhang Leping's cartoon stories of San Mao. Cinemato-graphy: Huang Baohua. Art Design: Zhou Xinren. Music: Pan Guoxin. Sound: Zhan Xin. Cast: Jia Lin, Wei Zongwan, Sun Feihu.

Mr. Wang: Flames of Desire (*Wang Xiansheng zhi Yuhuo Feishen*) 1993. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Xu Xiaofan, Zhang Jianya, adapted from a cartoon story by Ye Qianyu. Cinemato-graphy: Huang Baohua. Art Direction: Zhou Xinren. Cast: Lin Dongpu, Zhang Yu, Zong Xiaojun.

Reborn Hero (*Zaisheng Qiongshi*) 1995. Shanghai Film Studio. Co-direction: Li Guomin. Screenplay: Lai Ying, Mu Jiang. Cinematography: Shen Xingao. Art Direction: Hu Weiping. Cast: Zheng Aonan, Wu Xuewen.

Crush Landing (*Jinji Pojiang*) 1999. Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 114 minutes. Producer: Zhu Yongde. Executive Producer: Li Dianliang. Screenplay: Hao Jian. Cinematography: Yang Tao. Music: Pan Guoxing. Art Direction: Wu Jiakui. Sound: Xu Hong, Zhan Xin. Cast: Shao Bing, Wu Gang, Xu Fan.

Zhang Junxiang (third-generation director)

Doctor Norman Bethune (*Baiqiu'en Daifu*) 1964. Haiyan Film Studio & August First Film Studio Co-Production. Color. 12 Reels. Screen-play: Zhang Junxiang and Zhao Tuo, based on the book by Zhou Erfu. Chief Cinematographer: Wu Yinxian. Art Direction: Han Shangyi. Music: Lu Qiming. Sound: Wu Jianghai. Cast: Donald Sutherland, Gerald Tannebaum, Chun Li, Yin Nuocheng.

Zhang Junzhao (fifth-generation director)

One and Eight (*Yige he Bage*) 1984. Guangxi Film Studio. Color. 91 minutes. Screenplay: Zhang Ziliang, Wang Jicheng. Cinematography: Zhang Yimou, Xiao Feng. Art Director: He Qun. Sound: Zhang Yu. Cast: Tao Zeru, Chen Daoming, Zhao Xiaorui.

Come On, Team China (*Jiayou, Zhongguo Dui!*) 1985. Guangxi Film Studio. Color. Wide Screen. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Zhang Junzhao, Song Yijiang. Cinematographer: Xiao Feng. Art Direction: Yi Li. Music: Jin Wei. Sound: Zhang Yu. Cast: Ma Zheng, Rong Shixing.

The Loner (*Gudu de Moushazhe*) 1986. Guangxi Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Ci Minghe. Cinematographer: Qin Jinhong, Xiao Feng. Art Direction: Zhang Yafang. Music: Chen Yuanlin. Sound: Lin Lin. Cast: Sun Genga, Dong Xiaodong, Liu Qixin.

Arc Light (*Huguang*) 1988. Guangxi Film Studio. Color. Wide screen. 11 Reels. Screenplay: Xu

Xiaobin, based on her novella "Interview with a Mental Patient." Cinematographer: Xiao Feng. Art Direction: Deng Jin. Music: Wan Xiaoyong. Sound: Yao Guoqiang, Li Ao. Cast: Bai Ling, Zhang Guangbei, Xiao Xiong.

Zhang Ming (sixth-generation director)

In Expectation (also *Raincloud over Wushan*, *Wushan Yunyu*) 1995. Beijing Film Studio, Beijing East-Earth Cultural Development Co. Co-Production. Color. 100 minutes. Screenplay: Zhu Wen, from an idea by Wang Xingyu, Liu Yongzhou and Jiang Yuanlun. Cinematography: Yao Xiaofeng, Zhou Ming and Ding Jiancheng. Art Direction: Zhang Hongwen. Sound: Wang Weiyan. Cast: Zhang Xianmin, Zhong Ping, Wang Wenqiang, Yang Liu.

Zhang Nuanxin (fourth-generation female director)

Drive to Win (*Sha Ou*) 1981. Youth Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Zhang Nuanxin, Li Tuo. Cinema-tography: Pao Xiao-ran. Art Direction: Wang Jianjing. Music: Wang Ming. Sound: Zhang Ruikun. Cast: Chang Shanshan, Guo Bichuan, Lu Jun.

Sacrificed Youth (*Qingchun Ji*) 1985. Youth Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Zhang Manling and Zhang Nuanxin, based on Zhang Manling's novel "There Was a Beautiful Place." Cinemato-graphy: Mu Deyuan, Deng Wei. Art Direction: Wang Jian-jing, Li Yongxin. Music: Qu Xiaosong, Liu Bozhu. Sound: Ma Yuewen. Cast: Li Fengxu, Guo Jianguo, Yu Dan.

Zhang Yang (sixth-generation director)

Spicy Love Soup (*Aiqing Malatang*) 1997. Xi'an Film Studio & Imar Film Corporation Co-Production. Color. 109 minutes. Producer: Zhang Pimin. Executive Producer: Peter Loehr. Screenplay: Cai Shangjun, Diao Yinan, Liu Fendou, Peter Loehr, Zhang Yang. Cinemato-graphy: Zhang Jian. Original Music: Jia Mingshu. Editing: Yang Hongyu. Production Design: Hai Zhao. Cast: Lü Liping, Pu Cunxin, Shao Bing, Xu Fan, Guo Tao.

Shower (*Xizao*) 1999. Xi'an Film Studio & Imar Film Corp. Co-Production. Color. 93 minutes. Screen-play: Cai Xiangjun, Diao Yinan, Huo Xin, Liu Fendou, Zhang Yang. Cinematography: Zhang Jian, Bi Er. Art Design: Tian Meng. Editor: Yang Hongyu. Composer: Ye Xiaogang. Sound: Lai Qijian. Cast: Pu Cunxin, Zhu Xu, Jiang Wu.

Quitting 2001. Imar Film Company, Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 121 minutes. Executive Producer: Sam Duan. Producer: Peter Loehr, Zhang Pimin. Screenplay: Zhang Yang, Huo Xin. Cinematography: Wang Yu, Cheng Shouqi. Editor: Yang Hongyu. Art Design: An Bin. Sound: Lai Qizhen. Music: Zhang Yadong. Cast: Jia Hongsheng, Jia Fengsen, Chai Xiuling, Wang Tong, Shun Xing.

Zhang Yimou (fifth-generation director and cinematographer)

Red Sorghum (*Hong Gaoliang*) 1987. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 92 minutes. Screenplay: Chen Jianyu, Zhu Wei and Mo Yan, based on a novel by Mo Yan. Cinematography: Gu Changwei. Art Direction: Yang Gang. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Gu Changning. Cast: Gong Li, Jiang Wen.

Code Name "Cougar" (*Daihao Meizhoubao*) 1988. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Wide Screen. Screenplay: Cheng Shiqing. Cinema-tography: Gu Changwei. Art Design: Cao Jiuping, Dong Huamiao. Music: Guo Feng. Sound: Gu Changning. Cast: Liu Xiaoning, Wang Xueqi, Ge You, Gong Li.

Ju Dou (*Ju Dou*) 1990. Tokuma Shoten Publishing, Tokuma Communications, China Film Co-Production Corp., China Film Export and Import Corp. Co Production. Color. 95 minutes. Screenplay: Liu Heng, base on his novel. Cinematography: Gu Changwei. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Li Lanhua. Cast: Gong Li, Li Baotian, Li Wei.

Raise the Red Lantern (*Dahong Denglong Gaogao Gua*) 1991. ERA International (HK) Ltd., China Film Co-Production Corporation. Color. 124 minutes. Executive Producer: Hou Hsiao-hisen and Zhang Wenze. Producer: Qiu Fusheng. Screen-play: Ni Zhen, based on Su Tong's novella. Cinematography: Zhao Fei. Art Direction: Cao Jiuping. Music: Zhao Jiping, Dong Huamiao. Sound: Li Lanhua. Cast: Gong Li, He Saifei, Cao Cuifen, Ma Jingwu, Kong Lin.

Story of Qiu Ju (*Qiuju Daguansi*) 1992. Hong Kong Sil-Metropole Organization Ltd., Beijing Youth Film Studio Co-Production. Color. 100 minutes. Screenplay: Liu Heng, based on Chen Yuanbin's novella. Cinematography: Ci Xiaoning, Yu Xiaoqun, and Lu Hongyi. Art Direction: Cao Juping. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Li Lanhua. Cast: Gong Li, Lei Luosheng, Liu Peiqi.

To Live (*Huo Zhe*) 1993. Era Intl. (HK) in association with Shanghai Film Studio. Color. 125 minutes. Screenplay: Yu Hua and Lu Wei, based on Yu Hua's novella. Cinematography: Lü Yue. Art Direction: Cao Jiuping. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Tao Jing. Cast: Ge You, Gong Li.

Shanghai Triad (*Yao a Yao, Yao Dao Waipoqiao*) 1995. Shanghai Film Studio, Alpha Films, UGC Images, La Sept Cinema Co-Production. Color. Wide Screen. 108 minutes. Screenplay: Bi Feiyu, based on a novel by Li Xiao. Cinematography: Lü Yue. Art Direction: Cao Jiuping. Music: Zhang Guangtian. Sound: Tao Jing. Cast: Gong Li, Li Baotian, Wang Xiaoxiao, Sun Chun.

Keep Cool (*You Hua Haohao Shuo*) 1997. Color. 95 minutes. Producer: Wang Qipeng. Executive Producer: Zhang Weiping, Wang Wei. Screenplay: Shu Ping. Director of Photography: Lü Yue. Editor: Duna Yuan. Cast: Jiang Wen, Li Baotian, Qu Ying.

Not One Less (Yige dou Buneng Shao) 1999. Guangxi Film Studio, Beijing New Image Film & Television Consulting Co., Ltd. Color. 106 minutes. Producer: Zhao Yu. Executive Producer: Zhang Weiping. Screen-play: Shi Xiangsheng. Cinematography: Hou Yong. Art Direction: Cao Jiuping. Music: San Bao. Cast: Wei Minzhi, Zhang Huike, Tian Zhenda.

The Road Home (*Wode Fuqin Muqi*) 1999. Color/B&W. 110 minutes. Beijing New Picture Film Co. Ltd. & Guangxi Film Studio Co-Production. Producer: Zhao Yu. Executive Producer: Zhang Weiping. Screenplay: Bao Shi, based on his novella "Souvenir." Cinema-tography: Hou Yong. Art Design: Cao Jiuping. Sound Wu Lala. Cast: Zhang Ziyi, Wu Hao, Sun Honglei.

Happy Times (*Xingfu Shiguang*) 2000. Guangxi Film Studio in association with Zhuhai Zhenrong Company and New Picture Film Co. Ltd. Color. 95 minutes. Screenplay: Guizi, based on Mo Yan's novella "My Teacher Turning Humorous." Cinemato-graphy: Hou Yong. Art Design: Cao Jiuping. Music: San Bao. Sound: Wu Lala. Cast: Zhao Benshan, Dong Jie, Li Xuejian, Niu Ben.

Zhang Yuan (sixth-generation director and cinematographer)

Mama (also ***The Tree of the Sun***, *Mama*) 1990. Independent Production. Distribution: Xi'an Film Studio. B & W. 90 minutes. Cinematography: Zhang Yuan. Screenplay: Qin Yan. Cast: Qin Yan, Yang Xiaodan.

Beijing Bastards (*Beijing Zazhong*) 1993. Beijing Bastards Group with assistance from Hubert Bals Fund of the Film Festival Rotterdam. Color. 91 minutes. Executive Producers: Cui Jian, Shu Kei. Producers: Song Jing, Gilles de Villepoix. Director of Photography: Christopher Doyle. Music: Cui Jian Band, Dream Band. Sound: Wu Lala. Cast: Cui Jian, Li Wei, Dou Wei.

East Palace, West Palace (also *Behind the Forbidden Palace*, *Donggong Xigong*) 1997. United Films and Quelqu'un d'un Autre. Color. 90 minutes. Producer: Zhang Yuan, Christophy Jung, Christophe Menager. Screenplay: Zhang Yuan, Wang Xiaobo. Cinematography: Zhang Jian. Art Design: An Bing. Music: Xiang Min. Cast: Si Han, Hu Jun.

Seventeen Years (*Guonian Huijia*) 1999. Keetman Ltd. (China), Xi'an Film Studio, and Fabrica (Italy) in association with Ocean Film Co. (HK) Color. 85 minutes. Producer: Zhang Yuan, Willy Tsao, Zhang Peimin. Executive Producer: Jimmy Tan, Hou Shengjun. Screenplay: Yu Hua, Ning Dai, Zhu Wen. Cinematography: Zhang Xigui. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Wu Lala, Wang Dong. Cast: Lin Lin, Li Bingbing.

Zhang Zeming (fifth-generation director)

Favorite Piece of Music (*Juexiang*) 1985. Pearl River Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Zhang Zeming. Cinemato-graphy: Zhen Kangzhen. Art Direction: Zhang Jingwen, Peng Jun. Music: Zhou Xiaoyuan. Sound: Wu Muqin. Cast: Kong Xianzhu, Feng Diqing.

Sunshine and Showers (*Taiyang Yu*) 1987. Pearl River Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Liu Xihong, Zhang Zeming. Cinematography: Yao Li, Peng Lei. Art Direction: Peng Jun, Zhang Song.

Music: Zhou Xiaoyuan. Sound: Lin Guang. Cast: Yan Xiaopin, Sun Chun.

Foreign Moon (*Yue Man Yinglun*) 1995. Media Asia Films & Happy Valley Films in association with BBC Film. Color. 91 minutes. Co-direction: Chen Hsiao Hsuan. Cinematography: Yao Li. Music: Brain Lock. Cast: Chen Hsiao Hsuan, Liu Linian, Chen Daming, Xie Jiasheng.

Zhou Xiaowen (fifth-generation director and cinematographer)

In Their Prime (*Tamen zheng Nianqing*) 1986. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Co-driection: Guo Fangfang. Screenplay: Li Pingfeng. Cinematography: Zhi Lei. Art Direction: Ge Yue. Music: Zhu Shiduan. Sound: Hui Dongzhi. Cast: Hong Yuzhou, Yue Hong.

Desperation (*Zuihou de Fengkuang*) 1987. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Co-director: Shi Chengfeng. Screenplay: Zhou Xiaowen, Shi Chengfeng. Cinematography: Feng Wei. Art Direction: Liu Yichuan. Music: Guo Feng. Sound: Hui Fongzhi. Cast: Zhang Jianmin, Liu Xiaoning, Jin Lili.

Price of Frenzy (also *Obsession, Fengkuang de Daijia*) 1988. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Zhou Xiaowen, Lu Wei. Cinematography: Wang Xinsheng. Art Direction: Dou Guoxiang, Lu Wei. Music: Zhu Shirui. Sound: Gu Changning. Cast: Wu Yujuan, Li Jing, Xie Yuan, Chang Rong.

Black Mountain Passage (also *Heishan Lu*) 1992. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Zhu Jinxing. Cinematography: Zhou Xiaowen. Art Direction: Dou Guoxiang. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Hui Dongzhi. Cast: Ai Liya, Zhao Xiaorui, Xie Yuan.

No Regrets about Youth (*Qingchun Wuhui*) 1991. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 10 Reels. Screenplay: Wang Shuo, Wei Ren. Cinematography: Zhou Xiaowen, Lu Gengxin. Art Direction: Qian Yunxuan. Music: Qian Yuanxuan. Sound: Hong Jiahui. Cast: Shi Lan, Zhang Fengyi, Liu Yunlong.

The Impulse of Youth (*Qingchun Chong-dong*) 1992. Beijing Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Zhou Xiaowen. Cinematography: He Qin. Art Direction: Zhang Daqian. Music: Shi Song. Sound: Zheng Chunyu. Cast: Shi Lan, Chang Rong.

The Lie Detector (*Cehuang Qi*) 1993. Xi'an Film Studio. Color. 9 Reels. Screenplay: Wang Yugang. Cinematography: Lu Gengxin. Art Direction: Zhang Daqian. Music: Wei Yang. Sound: Zheng Chuli. Cast: Sun Chun, Fu Lili.

Ermo (*Ermo*) 1994. Shanghai Film Studio & Ocean Film Co. Ltd. Co-Production. Color. 93 minutes. Producer: Chen Kunming, Jimmy Tan. Screenplay: Lang Yun, based on Xu Baoqi's novella of the same title. Cinematography: Lu Gengxin. Art Direction: Zhang Daqian. Music: Zhou Xiaowen. Sound: Hong Yi. Cast: Alia, Liu Peichi, Ge Zhijun, Zhang Haiyan.

The Emperor's Shadow (*Qin Song*) 1995. Xi'an Film Studio and Hong Kong Ocean Film Co-Production. Color. 116 minutes. Screenplay: Lu Wei. Cinemato-graphy: Lu Gengxin. Art Direction: Cao Jiuping. Music: Zhao Jiping. Sound: Hong Yi. Cast: Jiang Wen, Ge You, Xu Qing.

Documentary by Director

Assayas, Olivier (French Director)

HHH—Portrait de Hou Hsiao-Hsien (*Hou Hsiao-Hsien Tan Hou Hsiao-Hsien*) 1997. Creative Workshop (HK) and AMIP (France). Color. 91 minutes. Producer: Xavier Carniaux. Screenplay: Olivier Assayas. Director of Photography: Eric Gautier. Editor: Marie Lecoeur. Cast: Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Chu Tien-Wen, Wu Nien-Jen.

Chou, Wah-shan (Hong Kong artist)

Tisese: A Documentary on Three Mosuo Women (*Sange Mosuo Nüzi de Gushi*) 2001. Color. 58 minutes. Independent Production sponsored by Arts Development Council (HK). Distrubuted by Ying E Chi Ltd. and Asia Video Publishing Co., Ltd. Producer: Chou Wah-shan. Assistant Director: He Xiaodan. Photography: Martin Doenper, Wang Jin. Cast: Dashilacuo, Ruakudadu, Chelacuo.

Hui, Ann (Hong Kong director)

As Time Goes By (*Qu Ri Ku Duo*) 1996. Chinese Television Company, Shu Kei's Creative Workshop, and Unlimited Film Sensation Ltd. Color. 59 minutes. Producer: Cheng Su-ming. Executive Producer: Jiang Feng-Chyi, Peggy Chiao, Ann Hui. Co-direction: Vincent Chui.

Kwan, Stanley (Hong Kong director)

A Century of Cinema **(series)** ***Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema*** (*Nansheng Nüxiang*) 1996. BBC. Color. 80 minutes. Series Consultant/ Narrator: Tony Rayns. Producer: Stanley Kwan. Script: Edward Lam. Director of Photography: Christopher Doyle. Music: Yo Yo Ma. Editor: Maurice Lee.

Wang Jinduo (mainland director)

Measure of Strength (*Jiaoliang*) 1996. August First Film Studio. Color/ B&W. 45 minutes. Screenplay: Zhi Shaozeng, Bao Mingrong, Qu Aiguo.

Wu Wenguagn (sixth-generation documentary director)

Bumming in Beijing—The Last Dreamers (Liulang Beijing) 1990. Video. 60 minutes.

1966, My Time in the Red Guard Era (*1966, Wo de Hong Wenbing Shidai*) 1993. Video. Music: Cobra Women's Band. Cartoon: Hao Zhiqiang. Cast: Tian Zhuangzhuang, Xu Youyu, Huang Ling, Hu Xiaoguang, Liu Longjiang.

At Home in the World 1995. Video. 170 minutes.

Jiang Hu: Life on the Road (Jiang Hu) 1999. Video. 149 minutes. Producer/Screenplay: Wu Wenguang. Camera: Su Ming. Sound: Li Ming.

Zhang Yuan (sixth-generation director)

Square (*Guangchang*) 1994. B&W. 100 minutes. Cinematography: Duan Jinchuan.

Sons (*Erzi*) 1996. Face Cultural Communication Center of Beijing. Color. 95 minutes. Producer: Zhang Yuan, Wang Shize. Screenplay: Dai Ning. Cinemato-graphy: Zhang Jian, Sun Hongqing. Cast: Li Maojie, Fu Derong, Li Wei, Li Ji.

Crazy English (*Fengkuang Yingyu*) 1998. DMVE Culture Development Co. Ltd. & Keetman Co. Ltd. in association with Ocean Film Co. Ltd. Color. 90 minutes. Producers: Zhang Peimin, Willy Tsao. Executive Producer: Jimmy Tan, Hou Shengjun, Shan Dongbing. Co-producer: Chen Ziqiu. Producer/Cinematography: Zhang Yuan. Music: Li Xiaolong. Recording: Shen Jianqin, An Wei, Hou Xiaohui. Cast: Li Yang.